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**2 November 1893.**









INTRODUCTION

TO

ETHICS,

INCLUDING A

CRITICAL SURVEY OF MORAL SYSTEMS,

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

OF

*Théodore Simon* JOUFFROY.

BY WILLIAM H. CHANNING.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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BOSTON:  
JAMES MUNROE AND COMPANY.

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**2 Nov. 1898**

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## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

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THE lectures, of which a translation is now presented, are the first which Jouffroy, who is professor in the Faculty of Literature at Paris, has published. Induced by an earnest request from those who had attended his previous courses, that his interesting instructions should be preserved in a permanent form, he consented to have his extemporary addresses taken down by a stenographer, and afterwards revised and corrected them. Their design may be best explained by the following extract from the author's preface:—

“It seemed to me that, in the progressive development of my ideas upon the grand problem of human destiny, those upon ethics could most readily be separated from the rest; and I was influenced by this additional consideration, that it was my purpose

before entering upon the science of ethics, to pass in review the various systems which had prevailed in relation to the fundamental principles of morality. This would give me an opportunity to explain my own system, and thus sum up the results of my previous researches.

“Feeling uncertain whether I shall be able to complete my plan, I shall subdivide my series of lectures into several parts, of which each will form a separate work. The *First*, under the title of an *Introduction to Ethics*, will be devoted to a consideration of the fundamental principles of moral science, and will include, beside my own views, a review and criticism of all the important solutions which have been given of these problems. The *Second*, under the title of *Personal Ethics*, will contain a system of the duties which a man owes to himself. The *Third*, under the title of *Actual Ethics*, will explain the principles of conduct by which man should be governed in his relations to things. The *Fourth*, under the title of *Social Ethics*, will embrace the science of rights and duties arising from the various relations in which man stands to man. The *Fifth*, and last, under the title of *Natural Religion*, will have for its sub-

ject the relations of man toward God, and a determination of the duties thence resulting."

These volumes contain a part of the work first mentioned, an "Introduction to Ethics," and consist of a critical review of various ethical systems. Preliminary to this survey is a lecture describing the results already attained by previous investigations, and two other lectures upon the facts of man's moral nature, from which some notion may be formed of Jouffroy's own theory, though it would be premature to discuss it, before a full exposition of it is given in a third volume, soon to be published. All that can now with certainty be said of this system is, that it is based upon scrupulous psychological observation, and therefore that it must contain much to interest and instruct, even if it fails to be an adequate representation of human nature. For though there is an element of the mysterious and infinite, pervading the spirit of man, and influencing all its operations, which no analysis can enable us to comprehend, yet the suggestions of every careful student of consciousness are a most important aid to those who seek self-knowledge. We may feel sure, too, that this theory will be developed with the singularly lucid method which characterizes the other

writings of this philosopher, and expressed in a style so transparent, as often to hide from a superficial eye the profoundness of the thought. Of the ethical system, partially unfolded in these volumes, this, then, is not the occasion to speak.

But an expression of the admiration justly due to these lectures, as criticisms, should not be withheld. From the facts of human nature, which he describes, as his point of view, Jouffroy takes a rapid yet comprehensive survey of all ethical systems, distinguishes and classifies them with great discrimination, and then proceeds to discuss, in order, the theories, which seem to him most clearly to manifest the essential principle of their respective classes. It may add new interest to these volumes in the eyes of English scholars, that, in almost every instance, a selection has been made from the works of authors, by the spirit of whose writings the moral atmosphere of England and of our own country is pervaded. The sagacity with which this critic penetrates to the very essence of these systems, and the fairness with which he recognizes their claims to respect, do equal honor to his head and heart. Most readers of these lectures will probably admit, that they had never rightly understood the principles

of Hobbes, of Bentham, of Smith, and of Price, nor comprehended the consequences to which they necessarily tend, until they had seen them illuminated by the analysis of this clear and candid Frenchman. The two lectures upon Spinoza are entitled to especial praise, as well for the lucidness of the descriptions and reasonings, as for the humility with which so deep-read a scholar confesses his inability perfectly to comprehend, and his incompetency to pass judgment upon this most abstract of all systems. To those who believe that every conscientious seeker discovers some elements of truth, while the whole is not revealed even to the largest minded, such an historical review of opinions, as is here given, must be invaluable.

Here this preface might with propriety be closed. But such gross misconceptions, as to the character of modern French philosophy, still prevail among us, notwithstanding the full expositions which have been laid before the public, that it seems unjust to let any opportunity pass unused of making known the true position which the writers of this school occupy. This will now be attempted by simply restating, as briefly and clearly as possible, what has often been said at greater length.

Within little more than half a century, the world has witnessed the rise of three distinct schools of philosophy — the Scottish, the German, and the French. The characteristic principle of the Scottish school, which originated in 1763 with Reid, is a rigorous application of the inductive method to the science of mind. This Locke had previously attempted, but, preoccupied with his theory, that all ideas are derived from sensation and reflection, he made the monstrous oversight of excluding the most vital of all ideas — the first truths, communicated spontaneously by reason. The necessary result of Locke's system was the skepticism of Hume. Appalled by this consequence, Reid was led to detect the fallacy of the modes of investigation, still employed by philosophers, and, discarding hypothesis, to adopt psychological observation as the only true method in intellectual and moral science. By this rule the Scottish school has been scrupulously governed; and though it must be admitted that their observations have been hasty, partial, and confused, and that their inductions have been careless and incomplete, yet the world owes a large debt of gratitude to these writers, for their clear elucidation of the primary importance of psychology.

The German school took its rise from the writings of Kant, in 1781. Kant, like Reid, was impelled to enter upon the profound researches which will immortalize his name, by perceiving that the consequences, which Hume had deduced from the principle, that experience is the only source of ideas, were strictly logical. With powers of reflection far surpassing those of any Scottish writer, he applied himself to the work of analyzing the elements of the human mind; and succeeded in demonstrating, what Reid had assumed, that intuitive reason suggests primary ideas, which, though first recognized on the occasion of some experience, cannot be derived from it, inasmuch as they enter into the very act of the mind, by which this experience is received. By the psychological information, which he communicated, Kant has conferred a lasting benefit upon his race, and substituted spiritualism in place of sensualism forever. But Kant did not stop here. Under the influence of the philosophy of Descartes, the whole energies of his mind were directed towards ascertaining the certainty of human knowledge; and in the solution of this problem he was brought to the adoption of a system of skepticism far deeper than that of Hume's, which he had refuted. His



assertion, that we have no means of proving the existence of objective realities, corresponding to our subjective ideas, determined the movement and character of the German school. The original thinkers, who have succeeded Kant, have turned their attention almost exclusively to logical and ontological questions. A later age may pronounce the methods they have pursued delusive, and distrust the results at which they have arrived; but it will also probably acknowledge, with respect, that these eloquent writers have awakened a new reverence for the human spirit, and communicated to the minds of their own and other lands, fresh vigor, by the freedom of thought, and depth of sentiment, with which their works are inspired.

While the Scottish school has thus been absorbed by psychology, and the German school by ontology and logic, the French school, which is their successor, has imbibed, in some degree, the principles of each, and blended them with a method of its own. It may be said to have commenced, in 1811, with the attempts of Maine de Biran and Royer-Collard to overthrow the systems of sensualism and skepticism, which had so fatally taken possession of the French mind. The efforts of these philosophers

introduced a profounder study of facts, an acquaintance with the writings of the Scottish school, and a stricter application of the inductive method. They began the work of reform. But it is to Victor Cousin that the French school is indebted for the wide celebrity, which it enjoys throughout continental Europe; and for the influence which it is beginning to acquire in England and in this country. The clear analysis, the rigorous inductions, the extensive scholarship, and brilliant eloquence of this admirable lecturer and writer, have secured him a sway over the thoughtful minds of his own nation, which promises to substitute rational faith for unbelief, and generous principles of private and political conduct for the maxims of selfishness. This movement Jouffroy is well fitted to advance, from his habit of patient observation, his liberal spirit, and perfect simplicity of method and of style.

The leading principles of the French school are three.

**I. PSYCHOLOGY IS THE BASIS OF PHILOSOPHY.**  
The facts of human nature, recognized by consciousness, are the only foundation for metaphysical or moral science. Neglect of observation leads

to useless hypotheses. Erroneous observation gives rise to systems false in principle and fatal in their consequences. Thorough acquaintance with the fundamental laws of our minds is of indispensable importance. The first qualification of the philosopher, therefore, is the power of profound reflection. Though indebted in part for this principle to Reid and Stewart, the writers of the French school have comprehended it more distinctly, and applied it more strictly, than their teachers, and have arrived at results more definite and complete than theirs. As psychologists, Cousin and Jouffroy have never been surpassed.

II. THE HIGHEST PROBLEMS OF ONTOLOGY MAY BE SOLVED BY INDUCTIONS FROM THE FACTS WHICH PSYCHOLOGY ASCERTAINS. We are not limited to a simple acquaintance with our own consciousness; but by reasoning upon our ideas, and the phenomena which experience brings before us, we may rise to a knowledge of the Infinite Being. Though the influence of the German school may here be recognized, the two methods are, in fact, directly opposite. The Germans begin with the absolute, and descend to man, the French begin with man, and ascend to the absolute. With regard to this principle, it may

be remarked, in relation to Jouffroy, that he has imbibed the caution of the Scottish philosophers; while Cqusin, in his bolder generalizations, shows more affinity with the writers of Germany.

III. PSYCHOLOGY AND THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY RECIPROCALLY EXPLAIN EACH OTHER. This is the principle, which, being more peculiarly characteristic of the French school, has given the system its distinctive name of *Eclecticism*. The principle is a most simple and rational one, though it has been most strangely misunderstood. Eclecticism means exactly the contrary of a commingling of heterogeneous systems; being intended to designate a discriminating selection of the elements of truth which may be found in each system. It may be thus explained: Philosophical opinions and popular beliefs must correspond to some essential principles of human nature, or else they would never have appeared, nor awakened sympathy. Were the various doctrines, in which men have believed, accurately analyzed, we should have a complete representation of man's spirit. The creeds of men have grown out of some primary law of their minds. There is a portion of truth, then, in every system of opinion and of faith. But how shall we detect

this, and separate it from the errors with which it is combined? Only by a knowledge of the fundamental faculties and tendencies of our nature. This psychology alone can give. Psychology enables us to recognize in any system the element of our spiritual being which it imbodyes. Thus the facts which we observe in human nature enable us to explain, to criticise, and judge, the theories which the history of philosophy describes. But, on the other hand, our psychology may be defective. How shall we test it? By its adequacy to account for the opinions which men have professed. If we meet with systems which we cannot explain, our observations have been partial, our psychology is incomplete, and we must resume our study of the facts of consciousness.

The following lectures afford a perfect illustration of the manner in which these principles of the French school should be applied.

This hasty description may be sufficient to show that the writers of the French school are, at least, safe guides in philosophical investigations. The love of truth and liberality, which breathe through their works, are the best antidote for whatever errors

they may teach. A familiar acquaintance with them can tend only to make us conscientious observers, strict reasoners, candid critics, and thorough scholars. And now to all fellow-students of philosophy these lectures are presented, with the sincere hope that they may derive from their perusal the instruction and pleasure, which have amply repaid the labor of the translator.

CINCINNATI, *December 23, 1839.*



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**JOUFFROY.**



# JOUFFROY.

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## LECTURE I.

### OBJECT AND DIVISION OF ETHICAL SCIENCE.

GENTLEMEN,

THE inquiry, to which our attention will be directed during the present course of lectures, forms but one chapter of that more general inquiry, which has been the subject of my instructions from this chair for the last three years. It at once presupposes the preceding courses, and prepares the way for those which are to follow. Before describing, therefore, the precise subject to which our attention will now be particularly directed, it may be well to reconsider the grand problem that for three years past has occupied us; to review briefly such portions of it as we have thus far discussed; and then to set clearly before our minds the part that now presents itself, according to the general plan which we had marked out. This rapid review will not be unprofitable to those who have attended the previous courses, and it will be absolutely necessary for all who have not.

Human destiny, regarded in its threefold aspect, —

as embracing the destiny of individuals, the destiny of communities, and the destiny of the race,—this, gentlemen, is the problem, to the solution of which my instructions have been devoted. When I first presented it to your consideration, I endeavored not only to make you feel how obscure and yet how important a problem it is, but also, by a severe analysis, to resolve it into the several questions which it includes. Having separated and disengaged these elementary problems, I then showed their connection with each other, and the logical order in which they should be discussed. And thus, having settled precisely the divisions of this vast inquiry, and the method to be followed in its pursuit, we began our labors, taking up first the particular question that, according to the plan we had marked out, came first in order.

This question was as follows: *What is the destiny of man in the present life?* The connection between the destiny of a being and his nature, is, as you well know, most intimate. Indeed, the different destinies of different beings are determined wholly by their natures. If all beings had the same nature, their destiny would be the same. It is to the nature of a being, therefore, that we must look, when we would learn his destiny; for it is this which imposes it upon him, and from this it results as necessarily as a consequence from a principle, or an effect from a cause. We have applied this method, dictated as it is by good sense, to man, and, from the examination of his nature, we have inferred his absolute and final end. But, in comparing this final end of man with that to which he actually attains in this life, we have been struck

with a fact, which has proved to us, that, in order to determine what is his end upon earth, we must have regard to something beside his nature. This fact is the difference between the destiny to which man actually here attains, and that which we see traced in plain characters upon his nature. We have easily discovered the cause of this difference. The circumstances amidst which our nature is here placed, are such as to render the completion of our destiny impossible. The destiny of man on earth is determined not only by his nature, therefore, but by his condition also. And, to decide what it must be, we should consider, first, his nature, and then the circumstances of his present being. It has been by examining the resultant, so to speak, of these two combined forces, that we have arrived at a solution — I trust a legitimate one — of the question proposed. The first year of my instructions was devoted exclusively to the solution of this problem, which is the elementary question of moral philosophy.

The second question that occupied our attention was this: *Is the destiny of man wholly accomplished in this life? or did it commence before birth, and will it continue after death?* And no one, before having determined this question, however profound has been his study of the present life, should flatter himself that he has a complete idea of the destiny of man, or even a clear idea of his destiny here. There is but one mode of solving this question, and it is a sure one. It is to see whether human destiny has in this world a true beginning and completion, or whether it is rather a drama, whose prologue and catastrophe

are wanting. It has appeared to us, from examination, that the actual destiny of man in this life is inexplicable, except upon the supposition of a life hereafter; and when we have compared it, such as it now is, with the destiny which seems necessarily to result from his nature, we have been convinced that his destiny is not completed here: hence our conclusion that another scene of being is absolutely demanded to do his nature justice. We have boldly asserted, therefore, the reality of this future life; and we have anticipated its character, by supposing that it will be especially adapted to the completion of his destiny. Thus have we convinced ourselves of the necessity of a life hereafter, and have decided what the destiny of man in that life will be. The same method applied to the problem of a life preceding the present one, has led us to an opposite result, but one quite as much to be depended on. Indeed, we have satisfied ourselves, that, although the last acts of the drama of human destiny are not to be performed on earth, yet still it had its true commencement here; and that there is no necessity, therefore, for supposing, anterior to birth, a prologue to the present life. Two years were devoted to this important inquiry, which forms one branch of natural religion.

Thus you see, gentlemen, the manner in which the first three years have been occupied, and the result to which we have been led. At the present stage of the inquiry, we have completely solved—according to the measure of our weak intelligence—the general problem of the destiny of man. We have learned that this destiny is divided into two parts,

of which the first is accomplished in this life; while the second is to be completed in one or more future scenes of being. We have learned the exact point to which this work of human development is carried here, and the manner in which it will be completed hereafter; and we have learned, further, the reason why it was necessary that it should begin here, and the necessity for its being completed, having been once begun. In a word, not only have we learned what is the actual destiny of man in this world, but have seen that this destiny — at once so sad, yet happy, so grand, though limited — is to be justified and explained only by a foresight of such a completed destiny as we have been led to contemplate. Here is the precise point in our inquiry at which we have arrived; and we are now to advance yet further.

The question that next presents itself, according to our plan, is this: *The end to which man is destined being known, what should be his conduct under all possible circumstances?* or, in other words, *What are the proper rules of human conduct?* The answer to this question forms the subject of the science of ethics. And the course of lectures of this and several succeeding years will be occupied in giving this answer. A question so vast must require many years for its full consideration.

The relations connecting this question with those which have before occupied our attention, and which we have now reviewed, must be evident to you at once. It would be as absurd to inquire how a being should conduct himself whose end is unknown, as to inquire what is the end of a being whose nature



is unknown. For the same reason, therefore, that man's nature should be determined before we inquire what is his destiny, should the question of his destiny be solved before we consider his duties. The question that we are now to consider becomes, therefore, an appropriate one. And now, having pointed out the relations of this question, and unfolded its meaning, let us proceed to measure its extent and separate its elements, and thence draw out a proper plan for this new inquiry upon which we are about to enter, or, if you please, the chart for our voyage.

But, in the very outset, we meet with a prejudice against the whole science of ethics, which it is neither philosophical nor reasonable to pass by. Upon this prejudice, indeed, are founded the objections of numerous systems to the science; and, if these objections do rest upon good grounds, the science is destroyed, and the object of our present pursuit proved to be an illusion. The ideas of rules and law, of rights and duties, imply the idea of *obligation*; and it is plain, that, if there really is nothing obligatory for man — if the idea of obligation is but a vain imagination, which the breath of philosophy dissipates — then all other ideas resting upon it vanish also, and with them the science of ethics, which presupposes them. To seek for rules and laws for human conduct, is to seek for that which man ought or ought not to do — for that which it is his duty to accomplish and respect — for that which he has a right to require other men to respect. Now, if he is really bound by no duties, and if other men are bound by none in relation to him, then are there no rules, no laws of

human conduct, to be sought; and the object of the science of ethics—the science itself—disappears altogether. It is, then, I repeat, a vital question for the science of ethics, whether there is or is not any thing obligatory for man. Many systems have answered this question in the negative. To describe the different ways by which they have arrived at this common conclusion, would be to anticipate the matter of the subsequent lectures. It is sufficient at present, therefore, to say that there are such systems, and that they have obtained celebrity from the authority of the distinguished men who have been their authors. The mere fact, however, that these systems do call in question the very foundation of those rules for human conduct which we propose to consider, is enough to show that we ought, before entering upon any examination of those rules, first to examine the truth of these systems, and to discuss the grounds of the prejudice on which they are based. We will, therefore, gentlemen, open the present course of lectures with this examination, and not proceed to a consideration of the various branches of human duty, until we have removed this prejudice, and reassured ourselves that there really is a law of human obligation.

Let us, however, pass, for the present, to a view of the natural subdivisions of human duty, assuming for the time that there really is a law of obligation.

It might be said that there is, in truth, but one duty for man, which is, to accomplish his destiny. The destiny of man being known, the rules for his conduct are known also. This is true; but equally true is it, that the relations in which man is placed are so

numerous and complex, that it is not always easy to see how he should conduct in order to accomplish this end. Hence it follows, that although his chief duty does comprise the principles and spirit of all duties, yet it is necessary to set these forth distinctly. To do this requires deep meditation and great sagacity; for the subject is at once extensive and difficult. It is the object of the science of ethics to determine the rules for conduct. It begins with describing the grand relations which man sustains, and then passes on to a consideration of the various branches of duty appropriate to each. Its great divisions correspond to our grand relations, and its subdivisions embrace the rules of human conduct which these different relations impose. The science is complete, when it omits no relation, and describes every branch of duty.

It is long since the common sense of humanity has declared, that man sustains, in this life, four principal relations: the first, to God; the second, to himself; the third, to things, animate and inanimate, which people the creation; the fourth, to his kind. Through all ages, therefore, the inquiry has been, what are the rules for human conduct in these four grand relations; and the science of ethics has been divided into four corresponding branches.

We will preserve this division, because it is legitimate and complete, and it would be in vain to seek a better. Such, then, are the four grand inquiries embraced in the subject of our present course, when taken in its full extent. But it is not enough to indicate merely this general division. We must take a nearer view of the different parts, and settle precisely

the object, extent, and proper name of each. Let us consider, then, successively, these four grand relations which we have stated, and enter into some more detailed description of the branches of ethical science corresponding to them.

## FIRST RELATION.

*Relation of Man to God.*

One element, by which our judgment as to the proper rules for human conduct, in each of the four grand relations, may be determined, is always given; I mean the knowledge of man's true destiny—of his final end. But another element is also given, peculiar to each relation; and that is, the nature of the being to whom man is related, and the nature of the relation which thence results.

In the relation that we are now to consider, we must elevate ourselves to a knowledge of God, and of our relations to him, before we can determine the rules which should direct our conduct towards him. A correct description of these rules will depend, then, not only upon the truth of our conception of man and of his destiny, but also upon the purity of the idea that we form of God, and of our relations to him. Hence arise the diversity and progressive purification of human opinions in relation to this first branch of ethics, which is usually called *natural religion*. The name, however, is an improper one; for it corresponds to only one branch of natural

religion, which, in its full extent, embraces, in addition to this question of our duties towards God, the further questions of God's nature, and of man's future destiny—three problems, perfectly distinct, but usually embraced under one common name. Corresponding in history to this branch of ethics, we find such various modes of worship as have been adopted under different systems of religion. Through all nations and ages, men have endeavored, through positive laws and customs, to express, in a more or less imperfect way, the conception that they had formed of religious duty. Parallel, therefore, to this division of ethical science we have an historical manifestation of man's ideas of it. And to all other divisions we shall find similar historical parallels. We must add, then, to our description of the laws for conduct, which reason announces, a history of the manners and customs by which man has expressed his various conceptions of them.

#### SECOND RELATION.

##### *Relation of Man to Himself.*

The branch of ethics that describes the proper rules of man's conduct towards himself, is called *personal morality*. A thorough knowledge of human nature, and of the external conditions upon which its development depends, when added to the true conception of our destiny, will enable us to decide upon the rules for the right treatment of both body and soul

To refute the opinion of those who deny that there is such a branch of ethics, it is enough to read the works of Epictetus or of Marcus Aurelius; or to suppose a man shut up in solitude in a desert island; or to examine the opinions of those who pretend, on the other hand, that all other branches of moral duty may be resolved into this. Without adopting this last opinion, a little reflection will soon convince us, that no duties can be more important. We find, in different forms of religious observances, and in the ethical systems of philosophers of all ages, — in national laws, especially in those of antiquity, — and, above all, in the manners and customs of all times and lands, — numberless rules, practices, habits, corresponding with this branch of ethics, and expressing, with more or less clearness, the absolute rule of duty which man owes to himself. Such laws and observances, taken together, form the historical parallel to this division of ethical science.

### THIRD RELATION.

#### *Relation of Man to Things.*

Under the name *things*, I include all surrounding creatures, animate or inanimate, organized or unorganized, with the exception only of our own race. I am justified in giving to them all alike this common designation, by the consideration, that, in my opinion, free will and reason are needed to constitute personality; and it is doubtful whether these are any more to

be found in animals, even in those which appear to a certain degree intelligent, than they are in minerals or plants. Will you excuse, then, the use of this expression, which I have adopted for the sake of convenience, and which will not prevent us from making the proper distinction between the different classes of beings represented by it? To form a clear and accurate idea of this branch of ethics, to which no name is particularly assigned, we can suppose the case of a man living alone on an island, like Robinson. We shall thus avoid all questions referring to the right of property, that is to say, to the right of making use of things, *exclusively of other men* — questions properly arising under the relation in which man stands to his fellow man, and wholly distinct from those which are suggested by the relation of individual man to things. In this supposed case of a man alone in the midst of things, you will perceive that there are questions of duty, peculiar to this relation. They are such as these: Have we a right to convert to our own uses the nature of things? Are there limits to this right? What are these limits? Are the limits the same in relation to animals as to things inanimate? The rules which we should form for our own conduct towards things, depend, you will see, upon the solution of these questions; and this solution depends upon our ideas of our own destiny, of the nature of these creatures, their destination and purpose here, and of the relations between ourselves and them. Such is the true object of this branch of ethics; and it is divided into two parts — the rules of our conduct towards *animals*, and the rules of our conduct towards

*things*, properly so called. To these rules correspond, in the various forms of religion, in the customs, and even in the laws of certain people, various practices, which are their historical counterpart, and represent them more or less distinctly.

## FOURTH RELATION.

*Relation of Man to his Kind.*

The relations which may arise between man and man are so various, that the corresponding division of ethical science is much the largest and most complex. And some writers have, in consequence, appropriated the name *ethics* exclusively to the rules of proper conduct between man and man. Subdivisions of these rules, too, have received particular names, and have become the objects of distinct sciences. And again, in the third place, some authors have introduced into the science of ethics, thus understood, researches which make no part of it whatever. The phraseology used in relation to this division of ethical science has thus become confused; and, in order to arrive at precise notions, and consequently at clear and definite expressions, we must analyze with care this grand relation of man to man, and distinguish from each other the different relations, or at least the principal ones which it embraces. This we will now attempt; and I must ask your candid attention.

The particular relations, comprehended under the general relation of man to man, admit of one primary



distinction, founded on the circumstance that some of these relations would exist even were there no such state as society, while others arise wholly out of this state, and presuppose it.

I am far from admitting the idea of that state of nature which some philosophers have dreamed of, who allot to man, as he came first from the hands of his Creator, the life of a solitary animal. All history protests against this fiction; and, so far from representing this condition as the natural state of man, history proves that it has been by a concurrence of remarkable circumstances, and only in a few rare cases, that any individual of the species has lived thus solitary. History does not contradict, however, but rather confirms the opinion that there has existed, at least in some portions of the earth, anterior to the formation of any society, a state which we might well call, for the sake of distinction, *the state of nature*; such a state, for instance, as Abraham and his children are described as living in by the Scriptures. This state differs from the state of society in many important respects, the chief of which I will point out. It is this:—The state of society is adventitious, founded, though it is, on many principles of our nature, while the patriarchal state is necessary; in other words, we cannot conceive of man as existing out of the *family state*, while we can easily conceive of him, and history has often pictured him, as living out of the *social state*, properly so called.

When we consider man as existing in this state of nature, which is a possible one, and has certainly preceded the social state, in some parts of the earth,

and probably in all, we find that there are two relations between man and man, which, equally with the state itself, are independent of the existence of society. These are the relations of man to man as individuals of the same species, and the different relations created by the family tie among its members. From these two kinds of relations arise two branches of duties and of rights—the duties and rights of humanity, and the duties and rights of family. These two branches may be called the *ethics of humanity*, and the *ethics of family*; and, existing, as they do, independent of society, I will call them both by this common name—the *ethics of nature*.

When society is formed, these two anterior relations of man to man, as such, and of the members of families towards each other, are found already existing; but society modifies both. In the bosom of society, individuals who are strangers by blood do not remain in the simple relation of man to man; they enter into that of fellow-citizens of the same state; and the members of a family, too, continue no longer to be simply fathers and sons, husbands and wives, brethren by blood, but they are also citizens together in a social state. Society modifies, therefore, the rules of right conduct between man and man, considered as such, and between the members of a family in all the domestic relations. It modifies these so as best to secure the good of the whole. Now, all these rules, thus modified, extended, multiplied, of whatsoever sort they may be, constitute what may be called *private ethics*, the first branch of *social ethics*, which in itself embraces the rules

for every relation that can exist between the citizens of the same state.

But, independently of such relations as exist previous to the formation of society, and of which it modifies the character, society creates a wholly new relation; it is that of a citizen to the society of which he is a member, or to the power which represents that society. Hence arise the rules of conduct for citizens towards the state, and for the state towards its citizens, which together form *public ethics*, so called, the second branch of *social ethics*.

Here, however, an objection presents itself, that must be removed before we go further. All rules of private and public ethics are evidently established relatively to the constitution of each particular state of society. It would seem, then, at first view, as if they must be wholly dependent upon this constitution, and as if it belonged rather to positive than to natural law to determine them. This would be true if there were not essential properties common to all possible forms of society, which arise out of the very nature of society, independently of the various forms which it may assume, and thus constitute its fundamental elements. These essential conditions give birth to essential social duties, which are natural and absolute, duties anterior and superior to all positive laws, and which it is the very purpose of social enactments to preserve, under every possible form of society. Here, then, we have the natural ethics of society subdivided, as positive social ethics are, into public duties and private duties.

You see, then, that, before we can determine the rules of the natural ethics of society, we must have previously settled two points — 1. The end of all society. 2. The essential conditions of all society. These two questions should occupy our attention, therefore, before we proceed to the examination of the rules of the natural ethics of society. And here let it be remarked, that this whole inquiry is distinct from questions as to the best organization, and the best form of society, or as to the best means of securing the material well-being of society. These are not so much questions of duty as of art. They are the object of the two sciences of politics and political economy, which are quite distinct from ethics; and I should not have alluded to them at all, had not some authors connected them with those which form the proper object of ethical science.

There is one other relation which arises from the general relation of man to man: it is that of societies to societies. The rules for conduct between one society and another are evidently the same with those between one family and another in the state of nature. They constitute what is called the *ethics of nations*, the fifth and last branch of this division of ethical science.

And now, to review our train of thought, we have found that the general relation of man to man divides itself into five kinds of principal relations — 1. The relation of man to man as such, which is the object of the ethics of humanity; 2. That of family, which is the object of the ethics of family; 3. That of fellow-citizens of a social state, which is the object of

private ethics; 4. That of citizens to the state, and of the state to citizens, which is the object of public ethics; 5. That of societies to societies, which is the object of the ethics of nations.

These five grand relations may be subdivided into three classes — 1. Those existing independently of society, which are the object of the ethics of nature: under this division come the first two relations; 2. Those arising from the existence of society, which would be the same were there only one social state: these are the object of social ethics, and include the third and fourth relations; 3. That resulting from the simultaneous existence of several societies, or at least of several families living separately, which is the object of the ethics of nations: this is the fifth and last.

These different branches of ethical science find their parallels in history: to the ethics of nature correspond a multitude of philosophical systems and religious usages; to social ethics, all positive laws; and to the ethics of nations, the customs which have governed the intercourse of nation with nation, in all the different ages of the world.

Such is the ideal of the complete science of ethics, as it has presented itself to the finest minds which have occupied themselves in its study. But as the word *ethics* has not been universally used in so wide a sense, it may be well to make you acquainted with such other and different meanings as have been attached to it.

When we consider the meaning of the epithet *natural*, in the term *natural ethics*, we shall be led to understand by it all rules of conduct resulting from

the nature of things, in all relations whatever to which reason can attain. Hence a very general acceptation of the word, which includes in natural ethics natural religion, personal morality, our duties to things, and all social rights and duties of every kind. But, on the other hand, if we particularly regard the word *ethics*, we may be conducted to two other quite different meanings of the term. Some writers, taking the word *ethics* in its philosophical sense, that is to say, as implying rights correlative to duties, are unwilling to employ the term *natural ethics*, except as designating that portion of the rules for human conduct, which, by imposing a duty on one man, create a corresponding right for another; and they limit its application, therefore, to one part only of the rules for the conduct of man to his kind. Hence a second acceptation of the word, according to which *natural ethics* comprehends neither natural religion, nor personal morality, nor duties to things, and not all the rules of conduct, even, for man to his kind. Others, again, taking the word *ethics* in a yet narrower sense, give the name *natural ethics* only to that part of the rules of human conduct discoverable by the reason which correspond to positive laws. This leads them to a definition much less comprehensive than the former. Hence the third and last acceptation of the term.

For myself, I would say that the use of these words is a matter of indifference, provided a definite signification is attached to them. I like one definition as well as another. But in the present lectures, I adopt the first mentioned, which gives to the term *natural ethics* the widest possible signification. Ethics then,

with me, means the science that treats of all the rules for human conduct in the various relations which I have enumerated. This science it is my wish and purpose to describe. It only remains for me to state the order in which I propose to discuss the different portions of so vast a subject.

I shall begin with personal morality, or the rules for the conduct of man towards himself. I shall then proceed to the rules for man's conduct towards things. Next, I shall pass to those which arise from the relations between man and man, taking up first the ethics of nature, proceeding to the ethics of society, and ending with the ethics of nations. I shall close the whole course with the consideration of natural religion, both because it is the crown of the whole subject, and because, having already directed your attention, during two consecutive years, to one branch of this science, it may be well to pursue it yet further. Of the different parts of this subject you can readily foresee that the third will occupy the most of our time; and it is pleasing to me to think that this part will interest you most deeply. I will do all in my power to reach it as soon as it can be done without sacrificing to your curiosity the interests of the science which I profess to teach in its strictness, and whose purpose it is, not to delight, but to exhibit truth. This sacrifice I can never consent to make.

One word more, gentlemen, before I close this lecture. Let it be well understood that it is no part of my plan to teach the rules for human conduct in detail, as they would be explained in a catechism. This would be an endless work, and would tend rather to

confuse than enlighten your minds. My purpose is very different. I wish rather to establish the principles of these different branches of the law of nature, and to communicate to you, if I may say so, their spirit and substance. For it is far less important to know the literal rule for every possible situation in life, than to have a clear and enlarged view of the general end which we should propose to ourselves; leaving it to conscience to decide what, in view of the great end, the proper course may be in the innumerable relations into which the mutable and uncertain scenes of life may bring us.



## LECTURE II.

## THE FACTS OF MAN'S MORAL NATURE.

GENTLEMEN,

WE have seen, in our former lecture, that the object of the science of ethics is the discovery of the rules for human conduct; and that, taken in its widest extent, it embraces all rules, of every kind, which should direct man in the present life. I have pointed out to you the different parts into which it is naturally divided. And, lastly, I have stated what branches of the science I shall pass by for the time, and those which I propose to treat at present, as well as the order in which I shall take them up.

Before entering, however, upon our inquiries, you will remember that there is a question of prejudice, so to speak, which we are to examine and answer. It is as follows:—Is there really any such science as ethics at all? For, as you well know, some philosophical systems have endeavored to prove that there is no law of obligation, and that morality reduces itself to mere counsels of prudence, to be followed or neglected, at our own risk.

Now, as these systems deny the very foundation of ethics, or at least so far alter it as to destroy its

true character and high importance, it has seemed to me necessary, before entering deeply into the science, first to examine the great fact in our nature on which it rests, and to discuss the numerous systems which do thus deny or alter it. Such a discussion, as you will at once see, properly precedes those inquiries which are the object of the course; and, besides, what can be more important than for us to know whether there is, in truth, any law of obligation for human conduct? The consideration of this question as to the law of obligation—a question that has occupied the attention of the most celebrated writers in philosophy, politics, and jurisprudence—carries us, then, you will see, to the very foundation of all duties and rights.

I have hesitated between two ways of proceeding in this discussion. I have questioned whether it would be better for me to explain and refute these systems successively, reserving till the end an exhibition of the facts in human nature which they have altered or misconceived; or whether I should not rather commence with an outline of the facts of human nature, and thence, with the light of these facts before us, pass to a judgment of the different systems which have given an imperfect view of them, sacrificing to clearness whatever greater interest novelty might give to the former mode of criticism.

I have determined to adopt the latter method; for I fear that, with all my efforts to make you comprehend the principles and tendency of each system, I should still fail, unless I had first set before you those facts of our moral nature which are the common foundation on which all systems rest.

I will begin, then, with presenting my own system; and I trust you will find it to be an exact exposition of the principal facts of man's moral nature. Having thus given you a distinct outline of these facts, I will then proceed to an examination of the different systems, and, bringing them successively into comparison with the standard of truth, I will attempt to show what facts they have either overlooked or perverted. In this way we shall be enabled to mark their various degrees of deviation; and it will become an easy task to refute their errors.

We will devote this lecture, then, to an exposition of the facts of our moral nature in their leading outlines; and, as this will be little else than a recapitulation of a part of my lectures for the last three years, I shall confine myself to a rapid review of the results at which we have arrived, endeavoring at the same time to state them with such clearness as will enable those who have not attended the previous courses, easily to comprehend them.

Beings are distinguished from each other by their organization. It is this which makes a plant distinct from a mineral, and animals of one species from those of another. Every being has, then, his own peculiar nature; and this nature destines him to a certain end. The destiny of a bee, for example, is different from that of a lion, and a lion's from that of a man, because their natures are different. Every being is organized for a certain end; and, were we fully acquainted with the nature of a being, we might thence infer his destiny. There is, then, an absolute identity between the true good of any being and his

destiny. His highest good is to accomplish his destiny—to attain the end for which he was organized.

As every being has a particular end, which is his highest good, because he is organized in a certain manner, and in virtue of this organization, so there is no being unendowed with such faculties as are fitted to accomplish this end. In fact, since the result of a being's constitution is a certain destiny, nature would contradict herself, if, after having appointed him to accomplish this end, which constitutes his good, she had not also bestowed such faculties as would enable him to attain it. To the eye of reason this seems a necessary truth; and experience is not needed to verify it, though it would be easy at any time to do so, by an examination of the nature of beings, of the end for which they are destined, and of the faculties given to them to accomplish it. Not an exception could be found to this principle.

Man, then, by being gifted with a peculiar organization, has necessarily an end, the accomplishment of which is his true good; and, being thus organized for a certain end, he has necessarily the faculties fitted to accomplish it.

From the moment when an organized being begins to exist, (and this remark is equally true of unorganized beings,) its nature tends to the end for which it is destined. Hence arise within that being impulses, which carry it forward, independently of all reflection and calculation, toward certain particular ends, which, taken collectively, make up its final end. We will

call these instinctive emotions, which, even in reasonable beings, have no character of deliberation, which manifest themselves as soon as the child is born, and develop themselves with his growth, *the primitive tendencies of human nature*. These tendencies are common at once to all mankind, and yet peculiarly proportioned in each individual; and the celebrated Dr. Gall has attempted to determine and enumerate them in an exact manner, by showing how they exist, in different degrees of development, in different individuals, and how they result in the formation of each man's character. These tendencies have attracted the attention, also, of a few philosophers, who, though they have not used them as they might, have still been guided by their knowledge of them in the construction of their systems.

As soon, then, as man exists, his nature aspires, in virtue of his organization, to the end for which he is destined, through impulses carrying him on irresistibly towards it. Later in life, we call these impulses the *passions*.

Contemporaneously with the development of these instinctive tendencies, impelling us to the end which is our true good, the faculties with which God has endowed us, that we may attain it, also begin to act under the influence of these impulses, and thus to seize the objects which they are fitted to grasp. As soon as man exists, there awaken, on the one side, tendencies which manifest his nature, and on the other, faculties given to him for their satisfaction. Such is the commencement and primary source of

human activity; and so long as life lasts do all the various phenomena of human conduct spring from the same origin.

I have, I believe, clearly proved, in the previous courses of lectures, that when these faculties which have been placed in us that we may realize the end to which our impulses aspire, first awaken and unfold into activity, they do so in an indeterminate manner, and without a precise direction.

The cause of the concentration of our faculties for the attainment of their end, which soon takes place, is the fact that, in a life ordered like the present, they meet with obstacles which would otherwise prevent their ever attaining it. I have already shown you that, if this world was made up from the harmonious forces of beings; and if all these forces, instead of opposing one another, were developed peacefully, — it would be enough for a being merely to develop itself to attain its end without effort; but such is not the structure of the present world. We might rather define it as a conflict of various destinies, and consequently of the forces of all beings which compose it.

It is, then, with our nature, as with all other natures, that, in developing itself for the attainment of its end, it meets with obstacles which arrest and impede it. To enable you to comprehend, in a precise manner, the fact which I have now pointed out, I will not enter into detail, but give merely a general outline, selecting, as an example from among our faculties, the understanding, whose office it is to satisfy our instinctive desire of knowledge.

As you well know, the understanding does not

discover at once the truth it seeks. It meets, on the contrary, with difficulty, uncertainty, darkness; in a word, with obstacles of all sorts to impede it. Now, what happens when the understanding, developing itself in its primitive mode of action, fails to grasp the knowledge which it is fitted to acquire? Spontaneously it makes an effort to overcome the obscurity it meets with, and the difficulties which retard it. And this effort is a concentration upon one point of forces before diffused. When the understanding develops itself instinctively, it takes no particular direction, but extends itself in all, raying out, as it were, through all the senses; but every where meeting with various kinds of obscurity, it concentrates itself successively upon them. And this occurs spontaneously — a fact which it is important in a moral point of view to state, because this spontaneous movement is the first manifestation of the power which we possess of directing our faculties, the first sign of free will. Remark, now, that this effort of concentration does not result from our nature, but from our circumstances, and that we feel pain whenever we are obliged to make it. Yes, even now, disciplined and exercised as our faculties are, it is always fatiguing to concentrate attention perseveringly upon a particular point. It is not, then, their primitive and natural mode of operation, but one to which they are condemned by the condition of humanity. The moment effort is relaxed, human nature returns with pleasure to the indeterminate mode of action which is natural to it, and finds there repose. In human life generally, and especially in the primitive condition of man, where reason has hardly

yet appeared, there is a constant alternation between these two modes of the development of our faculties—the indeterminate or natural, and the concentrated or voluntary.

I limit myself now to a simple statement of this fact, though hereafter I shall draw from it important consequences. There is another fact of equal interest, and it is this: However great may be the efforts made by our faculties to satisfy the primitive tendencies of our nature, and to supply them with the good they crave, yet are they never successful in obtaining more than an incomplete, and, in truth, an exceedingly incomplete satisfaction. Such is the law of life. Man never triumphs over the hard condition here imposed upon him. In the present life, complete satisfaction of our tendencies, perfect good, is never found—a fact as incontestable as those already noticed.

When our faculties, becoming active, strive to find satisfaction for our tendencies, and gain some portion of the good they seek, the phenomenon which we call *pleasure* appears. Privation, or the check that our faculties experience when they are prevented from obtaining what they seek, produces another phenomenon, which we call *pain*. We experience pleasure and pain, because we are not only active, but sensitive. It is owing to this sensitiveness, that our nature rejoices or suffers according to our success or failure in the pursuit of good. We can conceive of a nature which should be active without being sensitive. It would still have an end—a good; tendencies impelling it towards that good; faculties fitted to attain it: it would sometimes be successful, sometimes disap-



pointed; but without sensibility it could never experience pleasure or pain, that is to say, a sensible recognition of good and evil. Such is the true origin and character of pleasure and of pain; and these phenomena are, as you at once see, subordinate to good and evil. I beg you to remark this attentively, for good is too often confounded with pleasure, and evil with pain; but they are widely distinct. Good and evil are success or failure in the pursuit of those ends to which our nature aspires; we could obtain one and suffer the other without pleasure or pain, if we were not sensitive. But being, as we are, sensitive, it is impossible that our nature should not rejoice when it succeeds in attaining its good, and suffer when it fails. This is the law of our constitution. Pleasure, then, is the consequence and the sign of our having reached our good; pain, the consequence and sign of our failure to obtain it. But the pleasure is not the good, and the pain is not the evil.

As every being seeks a good, rejoices when it attains it, suffers when it fails, it must love every thing which can aid in procuring it, and feel an aversion to whatever prevents its acquisition. It is thus that, as our faculties develop, and as we meet with objects which advance or oppose our efforts, we feel for the first time affection and love, aversion and hatred. In this way it is that our tendencies, that is to say, the most important of them—the true passions of human nature—branch out as they advance toward the accomplishment of their end, and become divided into a multitude of particular tendencies, which we also call *passions*. But these are distinguished from our prim-

itive passions by the fact that the latter are developed spontaneously and independently of all external objects, and that they aspire toward their end even before reason has made that end known to us; while the passions which I call *secondary*, are first called forth by the external objects which help or hinder the development of the primitive passions. Whatever assists our tendencies we call *useful*; whatever interferes with them, *injurious*. Such is the origin of the secondary passions, and of the idea of utility. Among our natural tendencies are some, which, like sympathy, have regard to the welfare of our fellow-beings, while others have not, as curiosity, or the desire of knowledge, and ambition, or the desire of power, for example. And although it is true, that in infancy, and before reason makes us acquainted with our nature, all our tendencies are developed without any view to our own good, yet, even then, some among them are adapted to procure mere selfish gratification, while others tend to produce, in addition, the happiness of others. And it is important to be remarked, that even when, at a later period in life, and after reason has begun to act, we are benevolently disposed towards others, it is not owing to the influence of reason alone, but also of our tendencies, that we feel this sympathy, which, independently of all idea of duty and of all calculations of interest, impels us forward to the good of others, as its proper and final end. The principle is personal; but the end to which it spontaneously aspires is the good of others. Thus, even when man is moved by instinct only, he already has the benevolent affections.

The facts which I have thus far presented are peculiar to the primitive state of man — his infancy. When reason appears, two changes take place in this primitive state, from which two other moral states, entirely distinct, arise. Before describing, however, these two states, let us reconsider, in a few words, the constituent elements of the primitive state. I have said, that, in the very commencement of life, certain tendencies develop themselves, and manifest the end for which man is created; that contemporaneously appear certain faculties adapted to aid them in obtaining satisfaction; that the unaided development of these faculties is naturally indeterminate, but that the obstacles which they meet with produce incidentally a concentration, which is the first manifestation, or the earliest stage, of the development of the will. You have seen that human nature, because it is sensitive, experiences pleasure when its tendencies are satisfied, and pain when they are not; that, further, it feels love for whatever assists, and aversion for whatever prevents, the development of our tendencies; and that thus our primitive passions branch out into a multitude of secondary passions. Such are the elements of the primitive state. The peculiar distinction of this state is the exclusive dominion of passion. Undoubtedly there is, in the fact of the concentration of our faculties, a commencement of self-control, and of the personal direction of our faculties; but this power is as yet blind, and entirely obedient to the passions, which determine necessarily the action and direction of our faculties. It is at this period that reason appears, and frees the will from the exclusive empire of the passions.

Up to the time when it first begins to exercise its influence, the present impulse, and among these impulses the strongest, has carried the will captive, because as yet there can be no foresight of evil consequences. Thus the passion, for the moment active, triumphs over passions which are dormant, and among passions already awakened, the strongest has sway. This is the law of human volition and action in the primitive state. The will already acts, but it is not yet free. We have power over our faculties, but we cannot yet direct them altogether as we choose. Let us now contemplate the change produced when the reason, awakening, leads us out from this condition of infancy.

Reason, in the simplest definition of it, is the faculty of comprehension; and we must be careful not to confound it with the faculty of knowing. Animals acquire knowledge, but we see no signs of their being able to comprehend; and this distinguishes them from men. If they could comprehend, they would be like us, and instead of living as they do now, in the condition in which they are born, they would rise successively, as man does, to the two moral states which reason introduces.

When reason first begins to exert its power, it finds human nature in full development, its tendencies all in play, and its faculties active. In virtue of its nature, that is to say, of its power of comprehension, it enters into the meaning of surrounding phenomena, and it at once comprehends that all these tendencies and faculties are seeking one common end—a final and complete end, which is the satisfaction of our

entire nature. This satisfaction of our nature, which is the sum and resultant of the satisfaction of each separate tendency, is our true end—our real well-being and good. Toward this good all passions of every kind aspire; and it is this good which our nature is impelled, with every unfolding faculty, to seek. Reason comprehends this, and the general idea of good springs up; and although the good, of which we thus acquire the idea, is still a personal good, yet have we made an immense advance from the primitive state when we had no such idea.

The observation and experience of what is constantly passing within us enables reason to comprehend that the complete satisfaction of our nature is impossible, and, consequently, that it is a delusion to expect perfect good; that therefore we ought not, and cannot, aspire to more than the greatest possible good, that is to say, the greatest possible satisfaction of our nature. We rise, then, from the idea of mere good to the idea of the greatest possible good.

Reason immediately comprehends, too, that every thing which can conduct us to our highest good is itself good on that very account, and that every thing which would turn us from it is evil; but it does not confound these two properties of certain objects with good and evil in themselves, that is to say, with the satisfaction or disappointment of our nature. It draws a wide distinction between good in itself and the means proper to produce it; and, generalizing this property common to various objects, it rises to the idea of the *useful*.

Reason does not fail to distinguish also this satis-

faction or disappointment of the tendencies of our nature from the agreeable or disagreeable sensations which accompany them in our sensibility; and perceives that the idea of pleasure is different from those of good and of utility, and the idea of pain from those of evil and of injury; and as it had before acquired the general idea of good and the idea of utility, so now, by combining all agreeable sensations together, does it form the general idea of *happiness*.

Thus these three ideas of good, utility, happiness, are soon deduced, by reason, from the spectacle of our nature in its process of development — ideas which, in all languages, are perfectly distinct, because all languages represent that common sense which is the truest expression of reason. Man has now a key to the secret operations which are passing within him. Heretofore he has lived without comprehending them, but now he has become intelligent; he sees the origin and scope of his passions, the direction, bias, and measure of his faculties; he learns the nature and origin of his love and hatred, the causes of his pleasure and his pain; all becomes plain through the teachings of reason.

But reason does not stop here. It comprehends, too, that, in the condition in which man is actually placed, self-control, or the direction of the faculties and forces of which he is conscious, is the indispensable condition for his attaining the greatest possible satisfaction of his nature.

In fact, so long as our faculties are abandoned to the guidance of passion, they obey the passion which is dominant for the moment; and therein is a twofold

disadvantage. For, first, the passions are so variable and transient, that the sway of one is soon displaced for that of another ; there can be, therefore, no progressive or steady action of our faculties, and consequently nothing important is accomplished. And, secondly ; a momentary good, gained by the satisfaction of any dominant passion, is often the cause of great evil, while a momentary evil, from not satisfying it, often is a means to great good ; so that nothing is less suitable to produce our highest good than the direction of our faculties by our passions. Reason is not slow in discovering this, and of course concludes that, for the attainment of our highest good, it is not well that human will should be any longer a prey to the mechanical forces of passion ; it sees, on the contrary, that, instead of being borne on by impulse to the satisfaction of any passion which may for the instant be strongest, it would be better that our faculties should be freed from this servitude, and directed exclusively to the realizing of what is clearly seen to be for the interests of all our passions, that is to say, the highest possible good of our nature. And the more strongly reason conceives of this end, the more satisfied is it that we have the power to effect it. It depends on ourselves to form the estimate of our greatest possible good ; reason enables us to do it. Equally does it depend on ourselves to set free our faculties, and to employ them for the fulfilment of this idea of our reason. For we have the power ; it has been already manifested, and we have recognized it in the spontaneous effort by which, to gratify a passion, we concentrate upon one point all the faculties of the mind. We have but to

do voluntarily, what we have already done spontaneously, and *free will* is born. The instant that this grand revolution is conceived of, that instant it is accomplished. A new principle of action springs up within us, namely, *self-interest*, well understood — a principle which is not a passion, but an idea, which is not the result of a blind and primitive instinct, but of deliberate and rational reflection — a principle which is not, like the passion, a *momentum*, but a *motive*. Strengthened by this motive, our natural power over our faculties exerts itself, and, directing them by this idea, shakes off the bondage of passion and develops into full vigor. Henceforth human power is free from the vacillating and turbulent empire of passion, and becomes subject to the law of reason; it forms an estimate of the greatest possible satisfaction of our tendencies, that is to say, of our highest good, and pursues self-interest, well understood.

Such is the new moral condition which the action of reason introduces; self-interest, well understood, is substituted for the partial good to which the passions impelled us, as the end; and self-direction is made the means. The exclusive dominion of passion, which characterized the primitive state, is over. A new power has come in between the passions and our faculties, even reason and free will; of which the first points out an end, and the second directs our faculties in its pursuit.

It must not be thought, however, that, after this revolution, the direction of human power in the hands of reason receives no support from passion. The fact is quite otherwise. When reason first perfectly com-



prehends the inconvenience of yielding to passion, yet more when it conceives the idea of interest well understood, and of the importance of giving it a preference in every case over our passing impulses, then, at that very instant, does our nature, in virtue of its laws, become passionately attached to that system of conduct which appears a good means to attain its end, or, in other words, passionately attached to all that is useful ; it loves this system of conduct, deviates from it only with regret, and feels aversion for all that opposes it. Thus passion comes in aid of the government of human power by interest well understood, and harmonious action ensues between the passionate and rational elements of the soul. Yet is not this coöperation entire ; for the idea of our highest good, as conceived by the reason, does not stifle wholly the instinctive tendencies of our nature ; they still remain active, because they are imperishable, and crave, as before, instant gratification, and strive to employ, for this end, the force of our faculties, and often succeed. The idea of self-interest well understood finds sympathy indeed from our passions ; but it encounters also an opposing host. Human power is, then, far from being completely redeemed from the influence of the passions in the second state. They disturb too often, especially in weak minds, the control of self-interest. In a word, where reason introduces the idea of self-interest, a new moral state, a new mode of self-determination, arises. But it does not steadily take the place of the primitive mode of action. Man oscillates between the two, now resisting impulse and following his interest, now yielding to it a free range ; a new mode of self-

determination is introduced, notwithstanding, into the operations of our spiritual being.

This new moral state and mode of self-determination is, precisely speaking, the *selfish* state. The essence of self-love is the knowledge that, in acting, we are promoting our own peculiar good. But this knowledge we are unconscious of in the primitive state, and the child therefore cannot be called selfish. In him the instinctive tendencies of nature reign supremely, each aspiring to its particular end, as to a final end; the child perceives these ends, loves them, strives to attain them, but he sees no further. It is true, to be sure, that the passions are really tending to the satisfaction of the whole nature; but the child is unconscious of this tendency; he is not, then, selfish, in the true sense of that word. He is innocent as Psyche, loving without knowing what love is. Reason in man is the torch of Psyche. Reason alone can reveal to him the final end of his passions, and thus substitute a rational motive to conduct, for the impulses which before directed him. Reason alone, then, calls forth true self-love; it cannot possibly exist in the primitive state of infancy.

As yet we have not reached the state which peculiarly and truly deserves the name of *moral*. It results from a new discovery made by reason — a discovery which elevates man from the general ideas which belong to the period of self-love, to universal and absolute ideas.

This step the moralists, who base their systems on self-interest, do not take. They stop at self-love. In making it, we cross an immense abyss, which separates

the selfish from the disinterested school of morals. Let us see, then, how this transition from the second state, which I have just described, to the moral state, properly so called, is effected.

There is an illogical arguing in a circle concealed beneath the selfish explanation of human volitions. The selfish system gives the name of *good* to the satisfaction of the tendencies of our nature, and when asked, Why is the satisfaction of these tendencies a good? it answers, Because it is the satisfaction of the tendencies of our nature. It is in vain that, to escape from this vicious circle of reasoning, the selfish system seeks, in the pleasure which accompanies the satisfaction of our tendencies, an explanation of the asserted fact, that this satisfaction and our good are equivalent. Reason finds no more evidence that pleasure is equivalent to good, than that the satisfaction of our nature is; and the reason why this latter is so, remains therefore unexplained. It is this mystery, which, by painfully perplexing us, forces reason to ascend one step higher in moral conceptions. Elevating itself above exclusively personal considerations, it conceives the thought that creatures of all kinds are situated like ourselves; that all having a nature peculiarly their own, aspire, in virtue of this nature, to that particular end which is their highest good; and that each of these separate ends is one element of a complete and final end, which absorbs them all — an end which is that of the creation itself — an end which is universal order. The realization of this end alone, in the view of reason, merits the title of good, fulfilling the idea, and forming an equivalent to it so evident that it needs

no proof. When reason has ascended to this conception, it has reached, for the first time, the idea of *good*. It had previously applied the name in a confused manner to the satisfaction of our nature; but it could neither explain nor justify this use of the name. But now, in the light of this new discovery, the application of the word becomes clear and legitimate. Good — true good — good in itself — absolute good is the realization of the absolute end of the creation — is universal order. The end of each element of creation, that is, of each being, is one element of the absolute end. Each being aspires towards this absolute end in seeking its own peculiar end, and this universal aspiration is the universal life of creation. The realization of the end of each being is then an element of the realization of the end of creation, that is to say, of universal order. The good of each being is a fragment of absolute good; and it is on this account that the good of each being is really a good; thence comes its character; and as absolute good is worthy of all reverence, and sacred in the eyes of reason, so the good of each being — the realization of its end — the accomplishment of its destiny — the development of its nature — the satisfaction of its tendencies, which are all identical, become equally sacred and worthy of reverence.

The moment the idea of *order* is conceived, reason feels for it a sympathy so profound, true, immediate, that she prostrates herself before it, recognizes its consecrated and supreme right of control, adores it as a legitimate sovereign, honors it, and submits to it as the natural and eternal law. To violate this law

is an outrage in the view of reason; to realize order, so far as our weakness is capable of it, is good, is right, is worthy. A new motive of action is made known — a new rule, truly a rule — a new law, truly a law — a motive, rule, and law self legitimated, which are of instant obligation, and need the aid of nothing foreign, of nothing anterior or superior to make them recognized and respected.

To deny that there is any thing sacred, venerable, obligatory for us rational beings, is to assert one of two things — either that human reason cannot elevate itself to the idea of good in itself, of universal order; or that, after having conceived this idea, reason does not bow to it, nor feel instantly and deeply that it has, for the first time, become acquainted with its true law. But neither of these facts can possibly be misunderstood or questioned.

This idea, this law, gives light and strength, by showing us that the end of each being is an element of universal order; it communicates to these ends, and to the instinctive tendencies of all beings, a respectable and sacred character, which they had not before. Up to this time we have been impelled to the satisfaction of our tendencies by their impulse, or by the pleasure which follows this satisfaction. Reason had judged this satisfaction to be fit, useful, agreeable. It had estimated the best means of gaining it; but that it is lawful and good in itself, or that it is our duty to pursue it and our right to attain it, this it was as yet unable to perceive. The right and duty of advancing toward the end, which is our highest good, is not revealed, until we see our end to be an element

of universal order, and our good a fragment of absolute good. Our highest good assumes, then, its character of lawful propriety and absolute goodness; but not our good alone—the good, the end of every creature, equally becomes, to our view, lawful and proper. Heretofore we were able to conceive that all beings had tendencies to be satisfied, and that consequently this was as good for them as for ourselves; and, impelled by sympathy, we could desire instinctively their good, could find pleasure in doing so, and thus include the promotion of their happiness in our calculations of self-love. But that it is good and proper in itself that they should attain this end, and that this good, therefore, ought to appear in some sort venerable and sacred to us,—this reason could not determine or even conceive of. But when the idea of absolute good is once formed, what was unseen before becomes clear, and the good of others appears to us as sacred as our own; or, in other words, equally an element of that which alone is venerable in itself—order. Thus the idea of obligation attaches itself at one and the same time to the attainment of our own and others' good. And we see no longer any difference between the duty of accomplishing our own good, and of aiding other beings to accomplish theirs; both are parts of absolute good; and since this is obligatory in itself, it impresses the character of lawfulness upon them.

All duty, right, obligation, and rules of morality, spring from this one source, the idea of good in itself—the idea of order. Destroy this idea, and no longer is there any thing sacred in itself to the eye

of reason; consequently nothing obligatory, and no moral difference between our various ends and actions; the universe becomes a riddle, and all destiny a mystery. But restore this idea, and the universe and man become at once intelligible; an end appears for all and every creature; a sacred order, which every rational being is bound to respect, and to aid in preserving within and around it, is revealed to us, and with it duties, rights, rules for morals, and a natural code of laws for human conduct. Such are the changes in human nature which follow the conception of order, or good in itself.

But this idea of order, high as it is, is not the final limit of human thought. Reason takes one step higher, and is elevated to the conception of the God who created this universal order, and who has given to every creature its constitution, and consequently its destiny. Thus allied to the Eternal Being, order appears no longer a mere metaphysical abstraction; it becomes the expression of the thought of divinity, and morality exhibits its religious aspect. But even were this not seen, the obligatory nature of duty would still be felt. If, supreme above order, reason had never beheld the Deity, order would have been as sacred; for the relation between reason and the idea of order exists independently of all religious convictions. Only, then, when God appears to us as the very essence and substance of this order, if I may use the expression, as the will which has established it, the intelligence which conceived it, do religious and moral obedience become united in one, and order assume its venerable aspect.

There is yet another phenomenon of our nature to

be noticed. From very infancy, and long before reason, in its development, has risen to the idea of order, we feel a sympathy for all that has the character of beauty, and an antipathy to all that is wanting in this beauty. A profound analysis shows that this presence or absence of beauty is only the expression and material symbol of order or disorder. These two sentiments result, then, only from a confused perception of the idea of order, and are the effect of that deep sympathy which unites all that is elevated in our nature to this grand idea. Later in life, when we have conceived this idea distinctly, we are able perfectly to explain this instinctive sentiment of love for beauty, and of its attractive charm; and beauty is seen by us to be one face of absolute good. So also is it with truth. Truth is order conceived, as beauty is order realized. In other words, absolute truth — the perfect truth, which we imagine in the Deity, and of which we only possess fragments in ourselves — is not, and cannot be, any thing more than the eternal laws of that order which all beings tend to fulfil, and all rational beings are bound voluntarily to advance. As this order, viewed as the end of creation, is absolute good, and, as expressed by the symbol of creation, is beauty, so, considered as a thought in the mind of God or man, it is truth. Good, beauty, and truth, are, then, order under three different aspects; and order itself is the thought, the will, the development, the manifestation of God. But we must not lose ourselves in these lofty views; and we resume our subject.

When we have conceived the idea of order, and of the obligation we are under, so far as in us lies, to



fulfil it, a new mode of self-determination, in addition to the two which have at an earlier period impelled us, appears — *the moral mode*. We may be determined to act, not only by the impulse of passion, as in the primitive state, and by the view of the highest possible satisfaction of these passions, as in the state of self-love ; but also by the idea of order, or good in itself, to which reason has attained, and which is seen to be the true law of our conduct. And as soon as this motive begins to sway our actions, a third and wholly distinct mode of self-determination is introduced.

The characteristics of this new mode are widely different from those of passion or of self-love, although it has this in common with the latter, that it can take place only in a rational being. Both modes are thus so plainly distinguished from that of passion that no one can fail to notice it.

As self-love and passion may both impel us to the same acts, so self-love and the moral motive may prescribe to us precisely the same conduct in a multitude of cases ; but it is just when they thus do coincide that the differences which distinguish them are most clearly displayed. Self-love counsels, duty commands. The first looks only to the greatest satisfaction of our nature, and remains personal even while prompting us to do good to others ; the second regards order alone, and is forgetful of self, even while it prescribes the search of our own good. We obey ourselves in yielding to the former ; but in obeying the latter, we submit to something above self, and which has no other character in our eyes but that of being good, or, in other words, a law. In the latter case,

then, there is self-devotion to something not ourselves, while in the first there can be no devotion. The devotion of a being to something not itself, which seems to it good, is precisely what we mean by virtue or moral good; and hence you see that moral good or virtue could never be manifested except in a mind which has attained to the third state, and that it is a phenomenon peculiar to this mode of self-determination. Our acts are moral whenever we obey, voluntarily and consciously, a law as the rule of our conduct, and immoral whenever we disobey it purposely and wilfully. Such are moral good and evil, strictly defined. They are entirely distinct from absolute good and evil, which are order and disorder; and equally distinct from the kinds of good and evil which we call happiness or misery, and which consist in the accomplishment of man's peculiar end, or the fulfilment of order in relation to him.

This difference between the moral mode of self-determination and the two others reappears in the phenomena which follow this act of choice. Among these phenomena is one especially characteristic of the moral state. Whenever we comply with the requisitions of the moral law, independent of all pleasure which sensibility experiences, we judge ourselves worthy of esteem or reward; and, in the opposite case, independent of pain, we condemn ourselves as worthy of blame and punishment. This is called the satisfaction of having done well, and the pain of having done ill, or remorse.

This judgment of merit or demerit necessarily follows every act which has a moral character, whether

good or bad. It does not and cannot follow the two first described modes of volition. When we have acted contrary to well-understood self-interest, we may lament our feebleness and want of skill, or, in the opposite case, may congratulate ourselves on our prudence, wisdom, tact. But these phenomena are quite distinct from moral approbation or disapprobation. No one feels remorse for having failed in securing his interests. It is only when self-interest is united to the idea of order, and when our conduct, by losing a good, seems in so doing to violate this order, that remorse follows imprudence. It is a consequence of this last consideration only, never of the first. I do not condemn, you see, self-interest; on the contrary, I prove that it is lawful as an element of order, and I make it in many cases a duty. But this character it does not possess in itself; it derives it from absolute good. Such are the phenomena which follow a moral action, whether good or evil.

This outline would not be complete without adding two observations, which sum up the whole matter.

To what end do our primitive tendencies, and the passions arising from them, tend? To the true end of our nature, our true good. How is our conduct directed by self-interest well understood? To the fullest possible realization of the tendencies of our nature; that is to say, the most perfect accomplishment of our end or good. What does the law of order, when it finally appears in us, prescribe? A respect for absolute good, or order, and an effort to realize it completely. But our good is an element of absolute

good, of order. The law of absolute order, then, commands the accomplishment of that very good which nature craves and self-love recommends. True, it is not with a view to ourselves, but to universal order, that it commands this; true, it demands not only our own good, but the good of others also. But, on the one hand, our nature loves order, and instinctively seeks the good of others; and, on the other, self-love shows us that the enjoyments of beauty and of benevolence are two chief elements of happiness, and that respect for the interests of others and for order must enter into the calculations of our own private interest. There is, then, no contradiction, but an entire harmony, between the primitive tendencies of our nature, self-interest well understood, and the moral law. These three principles do not impel us in a different, but in the same direction. The moral motive does not enter to destroy the other two, but to explain their object and regulate their course. Indeed, how could man direct himself aright, if he was condemned to the constant conflicts which some philosophers have imagined,—if he was compelled by an obligatory principle, conceived by the reason, to sacrifice continually, in order that he might be virtuous, both the impulses of natural instinct, and the counsels of prudence? None could be virtuous on these conditions. Most true, the end of virtue is distinct from that of self-love and of passion; but these ends are not opposed to each other: they are entirely in accordance; and hence may every virtue find an auxiliary in passion and self-interest. And hence, also, in very many cases,

instinct and self-love impel us to the very course which the moral law requires. Thus is it with the child, and even with the majority of men; and it is through this agreement of passion and self-interest with duty that societies subsist. For, if every act, not performed with direct reference to duty, was, on that account, opposed to the moral law, and at variance with order, communities could not only not endure, but they would never be even established.

We must renounce, then, these false views, and look at things as they are. Reason only modifies man's obedience to his passions and his interest, and in this manner. As reason, under the influence of self-love, makes known to our nature one general end, which includes the various ends of particular passions, and which consequently deserves the preference — thus preventing the former blind obedience of the will to passion; so reason, under the influence of morality, reveals, beyond our private good, an absolute good, which at once comprises this and the good of all other beings also, and which, therefore, is far to be preferred — thus preventing the narrow and exclusive pursuit of our own well-being. And, as the impulse of passion was seen to be of an inferior order, when that of self-interest well understood appeared, so self-interest falls in the scale, when the motive of moral law reveals itself. But, because the moral motive is better than self-love, self-love is not therefore destroyed, any more than passion is rooted out because self-interest is seen to be superior. The desire and pursuit of self-interest still remain after absolute good is made known to us, as the impulse of passion

remains after self-interest is comprehended. When self-love, therefore, cannot see the prospect of private benefit in the course which respect for absolute good demands, as when passion is restrained from seeking its end immediately by the counsels of interest, disagreement enters among the various springs of conduct; and, though we still see what it is best for us to do, we are not always prudent or virtuous enough to do it. Behold what these contests between the three moving springs of conduct amount to! They are, in general, the effect of the blindness of passion, or of the mistakes of self-love; for, in fact, it is most for the interest of passion to sacrifice itself to self-love, and most for the interest of self-love to sacrifice itself to order.

Thus far I have spoken of the three states of the moral nature in man, as if they belonged to three different periods of life — as if they were produced in us successively. But this is not exactly a true description, and some further explanation is needed. First, then, no one of these three modes of determination destroys in its development those previously in operation, but only superadds its influence to them; so that, when once called into action, they henceforth coëxist. And, secondly, as to the order of their appearance, although it is true that the passionate mode does precede, chronologically, the other two, and reigns supreme in infancy, it would still be difficult to prove a like supreme control of the selfish and moral state successively.

Reason first shows itself at an early period; but no one would be bold enough to assert that she

risers at once to that high conception of order, which makes the moral law. Yet more; we all know that, in the larger part of mankind, this conception of the moral law is never distinctly formed at all. We are brought, therefore, to the conclusion, that there is no morality in any man until after a certain age, and that, in the majority of men, there is none at any time. But we must distinguish here a confused from a clear view of the moral law. A confused view of it is contemporaneous with the first appearance of reason: it is one of man's earliest conceptions; but in most persons the conception remains indistinct through life, and never becomes a vivid idea. Conscience, as it is called, is nothing more than this obscure notion of order; and hence, in its effects, it resembles less a conception of the reason than an instinct or a sense. Its judgments have not the appearance of being derived from general principles applied to cases as they arise; but they rather seem to result from a kind of tact, which, in each particular instance, makes it sensible of good and evil. The character of obligation, however, is never, in the phenomena of conscience, affected by the confused nature of our perceptions of good and evil. However confused our views, conscience still points out good as something which we ought to do, and evil as something which we ought to shun; and, when we have obeyed or disobeyed it, we feel as sensibly self-approval or remorse as if we had obeyed a more elevated conception and a clearer idea of the moral law. Thus conscience, or the confused view of order, is sufficient to make men

practically virtuous or vicious, criminals or heroes; though he, who conceives most distinctly the law and its sacred obligation, is the most culpable, because he transgresses it most consciously. Not without reason, then, does human justice make distinctions between culprits, and apply punishments proportioned in severity to the supposed development of intelligence, and consequently to the degree of knowledge of good and evil.

From these details you will see that reason, as soon as it is developed, introduces at one and the same time the motive of self-love and of morality; and thus that these two modes of self-determination, which I have separated for the sake of accurate description, are really contemporaneous. On the other hand, remember that reason does not abolish the passionate mode, which is supreme in infancy. Dating, then, from the birth of reason, human life is a series of alternations from one to the other of these three states of the moral nature, according to the degree in which passion, self-love, or the moral law, gains sway over our will, and presides in our decisions. No period of life is free from these alternations. Men are marked in character by the frequency with which one or the other of these motives triumphs. Some yield to passion habitually, and are passionate men; others follow interest well understood, and are lovers of self; others again obey the moral law, and are virtuous. According to the prevalence in our habits of mind, of one or the other of these modes of choice, does man assume a moral character. No one obeys, exclusively and constantly, one or the other; however strong the habitual predominance of either, the other two always



control some of our volitions. Yet more; in far the greater number of cases all three concur and coöperate through the force of that harmony which fundamentally unites them; and acts produced by one or the other exclusively are extremely rare. Thus man is never wholly virtuous, nor wholly selfish, nor wholly passionate; and whichever spring may seem to move his conduct, the secret impulse of the others is more or less blended with it.

Such is an outline of those facts of man's moral nature which I have in former courses exhibited to you. In the light of these facts, you will easily comprehend, I trust, the different systems of moral philosophy which have denied the existence of a law of obligation, and you will detect without difficulty the sources of their different errors. But so important is it that you should have a clear understanding of the psychology of man's moral nature, that I shall resume the consideration of these facts in my next lecture.

## LECTURE III.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

GENTLEMEN,

As the ideas of right and of duty imply that of law, and as the idea of law implies that of obligation, it is plain that the question, Whether there are any rights or duties, returns to the question, Whether there is any law of obligation, or, to abridge the expression, any law; for the word law necessarily carries with it the idea of obligation. Before inquiring what our duties and rights are, and in what they consist, it is indispensable, then, first to consider these two questions—“Is there a law of obligation? and, if so, what is it?” It would still have been proper to decide these questions, even if there had never existed philosophers who have replied to the first in the negative, or who, in their attempts to answer the second, have disagreed as to the nature of this obligatory law, whose existence they yet recognized. But since certain philosophers have denied that there is any law of obligation, and since those who have admitted its existence have given many and diverse accounts of its nature, it is evident that the consideration and solution of these questions cannot be dispensed

with. For if the philosophers who deny the existence of the law are right, we need examine no further as to our duties and rights; and we can in no way determine what these rights and duties are, if, after having satisfied ourselves that there is such a law, we still hesitate as to its nature, and make no choice among systems which have arrived at different results, in this attempt to describe it.

The systems based on false principles of ethics may be divided into three classes. One class maintains that there can be no law of obligation, while a second asserts that there really is none. These two classes deny the possibility of ethical science. A third class destroys the law by altering its nature; it comprises the systems which, though they admit an obligatory law, yet do not recognize it as it is, but variously disfigure it. The common result of such mutilations is to destroy it; for there can be but one law of obligation, and every system that substitutes another, attributes to this false law the character of obligation, which, according to the nature of our minds, attaches only to the true law. Thus in different ways do these three classes of systems equally destroy the law of obligation, and consequently all duty and all right—the whole science of ethics.

Such, neither more nor less, are the classes of systems to be examined; and, for the purposes of this examination, we must solve the proposed question—“Is there a law of obligation, and, if so, what is it?”

It cannot escape you that these are questions of fact, and not abstract ones, to be solved by reasoning. Man exists; he chooses; he acts; he is impelled by such

and such motives. Among these motives is there one which has the character of a law? This is the first question. If there is, What is that motive, its nature and character? This is the second. Both are questions of fact.

Hence you will see, that to answer these two primary questions, on which the whole science of ethics depends, or, what amounts to the same thing, to estimate rightly the truth of these systems, which have denied or disfigured this science, we must observe the facts of man's moral nature; and therefore have I attempted to sketch the great outlines, though not the details of these facts.

Such was the single object of my last lecture. I owe you, before proceeding further, a short explanation of the expression, *the moral facts of human nature*. To avoid misapprehension, it is absolutely necessary that we should understand perfectly the expression made use of, and determine precisely the acceptance of the words.

There is no morality in human nature, unless man is free and subject to a law of obligation. Destroy duty, or the possibility of directing ourselves by it, and you destroy all morality; for a conformity of the resolves of the will to the obligatory law of duty is precisely what constitutes morality. Other than this there is none. Thus, in its true acceptance, morality signifies the conformity of our resolves to the law of duty. When this conformity exists in any act, the agent is moral; when it does not exist, the act and agent are immoral.

This is the exact meaning of the word *morality*; and

from this comes the epithet *moral*. It is in a rather more enlarged sense, however, that I call the facts which I have exhibited to you, *moral*. Analogy seems to me to justify my use of the word. If there is any thing moral in human volitions, it will be found in the phenomena which precede and are associated with them, or, in other words, which concur to produce them. All these facts may, then, in an enlarged sense, be called *moral facts*, inasmuch as among them are to be found those which especially constitute morality. In my last lecture, I described, as moral facts, all phenomena in any way connected with our volitions, not limiting the application of the term to those which constitute, strictly speaking, morality. And it is in this sense, as I have now defined it, that you will please, then, to understand the expression.

And now, gentlemen, after what I have said in the commencement of this lecture as to the impossibility of solving the two questions — “Is there a law of obligation? and, if so, what is it?” and the equal impossibility of correctly appreciating the systems which have replied in the negative to the first, and wrongly answered the second, without reference to the moral facts of human nature, that is to say, without knowing how the will is really determined in man — after this, you will feel that it is highly important to comprehend clearly the whole process of our volitions, and the function of each element which concurs to produce them. Unless you keep this process before your minds, and comprehend clearly all its springs, it is impossible that you should arrive at a satisfactory solution of these questions, or a correct understanding

of the systems. I wish, then, to go over again, though in a different manner, the grand outlines of the picture, which I have presented to you in my last lecture.

When I reflect upon the effect which my rapid sketch may have produced on the minds of those who have not attended my former courses, it seems to me a duty, if I wish to be comprehended, to draw these outlines yet more distinctly. Once agreed upon what really does pass within us in the process of volition, and we shall have no difficulty in distinctly comprehending the various systems. They will have no obscurity for you. You will see how, in the real facts of our moral nature, pretexts may be found for each and every system; how each and all have, in some way, mutilated these facts; and how, in different ways, and through various illusions, they arrive at erroneous results.

Were the principles of human nature which concur to produce our volitions all developed at birth, and were not some of them delayed, there would be but one moral state for a human soul. But as, among these elements, there are two, which are not developed until an advanced period of life, we do not, upon examination, find man's moral condition always the same; and thus are we enabled to distinguish different moral periods.

Hence, in my last lecture, I was led to describe a first, second, and third moral state; in other words, three distinct modes of volition — the primitive, the selfish, and the moral mode, properly so called; in which latter, the law of obligation, not

observable in the two former, first makes its appearance.

Notwithstanding the differences which distinguish these three states of the moral nature, their elements are neither numerous nor difficult to seize. Four principles of human nature alone concur to produce them, and if we can but disengage the functions of these different elements in each of the three states, we shall gain a sufficiently precise notion of the process of volition.

These four principles of human nature are, the instinctive and primitive tendencies, as I have called them; the faculties adapted to these; will, or the power of directing our faculties; and, lastly, reason, or the power of comprehension.

And now I wish you to see, clearly, which of these principles are active in each state, and what are the functions they fulfil. To this point, therefore, I now once more invite your attention.

Human nature, having an organization peculiar to itself, is, by this organization, destined to a peculiar end. Life begins with the instinctive movement which impels human nature towards its end. This instinctive movement is not simple, but complex; in other words, it is made up of several instinctive movements, each of which has its peculiar object, the aggregate of which objects forms the true end of man—his highest good. These instinctive movements are developed in our earliest existence; for, should a moment elapse between the commencement of our existence and their development, it would be

a moment when we were existing indeed, but not living. But man must live as soon as he exists, and it is his life to aspire towards his end. From the first moment of existence, we feel awakening within us all the instincts with which our nature is gifted; in other words, all the desires which result from our organization; and these instincts and desires seek blindly each its peculiar object. Such is the action of the instinctive tendencies of our nature; and not for one moment of existence is this development, which commences with life, suspended; it remains even in sleep; the moving springs of human activity are the same whether we sleep or wake; their action is unintermitted.

Thus, as I have said, are the primitive tendencies the moving springs of our activity; they constitute our moving force. In fact, it is by them that our nature is prompted, and its faculties put in operation; for the final end of the activity of our faculties is the satisfaction of the permanent and primitive desires, at once instinctive and blind, which manifest in the form of passion the cravings of our nature, explain its characteristic properties, and reveal the end for which it is destined.

It cannot be, then, that the element of our primitive and instinctive tendencies should be wanting in either of the three moral states described. It appears in all, though supreme only in the first.

Such is the first of the four principles which concur in producing our volitions; we may call it the *main spring* — the *moving force* within us.

The second element or principle of our nature which



influences our volition is that to which I have given the general name of *faculties*. Had the Creator assigned man an end, and implanted an irresistible desire to attain it, without having placed in human nature the faculties needed as instruments for its satisfaction, and fitted to realize the end, it would have been a contradiction of his own work. There is an absolute necessity, therefore, that, beside the primitive tendencies impelling us to our end, we should possess certain faculties or instruments enabling us to gain it. These faculties constitute the second of the four elements to which I am now directing your attention.

We must not confound the faculties which are the executive power within us, with the free will which controls this power, guiding its direction. There is a period in the life of man, and perhaps a prolonged one, when there is no sovereign power within him, if I may say so; that is to say, when the self-direction of our faculties, which constitutes liberty, does not as yet exist. During the early years of childhood, we exercise no government at all over our faculties, and to those succeed others, when we can hardly be said to govern them. These instruments are still, however, vitally acting; only they act independently of us, or, what amounts to the same thing, without our will's impressing upon them any direction, and under the sole impulse of our tendencies. Quite distinct, then, are our faculties, or the executive force, as I have called it, from the power of *will*, whose function it is to direct them. The faculties exist independently of the will in the early period of life; and this independence

is more or less manifested in every era of human existence.

The faculties of human nature never sleep ; never cease to act. As our instinctive tendencies constantly impel us to act, so our faculties are always in some sort of movement and action. But it is not thus with the will. Not only do we not govern our faculties in the early period of life, but we often intermit our control at all periods. Not seldom it happens, then, that even in the mature man, nothing intervenes between the passions which impel, and the faculties or executive part of our nature ; but the first acts directly upon the second. This phenomenon occurs in many cases when strong passions appeal suddenly to the faculties, or when our will, tired of its efforts, suspends for a time its oversight and government. The will is an intermittent power, while the faculties act incessantly with various degrees of energy or feebleness.

You see, therefore, that our faculties, or the executive part of our nature, like our primitive tendencies, are ever in movement ; but their power may take two different directions, according as they are acted upon immediately by the passions, as in the primitive state, or by the will—the sovereign part of our nature, which is not developed till later, and whose action, even then, is sometimes intermitted. Free will presupposes reason, and comes only with reason ; and when these two principles are introduced between the instinctive impulses of our nature and our faculties, our moral condition is wholly changed.

It remains now to be seen what part these two principles act in the process of volition ; for, adding these

two principles to our instinctive impulses and to our faculties, we have all the elements which concur to produce our acts of will.

We do not know *à priori* that we are endowed with the power of governing and directing our faculties. We are, indeed, wholly ignorant of it, and we should never learn the fact without experience. In the early period of life there are no signs of our capacity of self-control. Our faculties, as I have before said, are, then, wholly under the direction of impulse, which, craving certain objects, and aspiring to certain ends, impels them in the direction that will gratify their desire without our intervention. As one of our passions or another may be strongest, and may sway the others, so all our faculties take the direction which it prescribes; but the moment another, yet stronger, rises, our faculties quit their first direction, and obediently follow a new one.

In the conduct of children, this vacillation is constantly noticed. Nothing is more variable than the relative force of our different passions; and, as our faculties fall necessarily under the sway of the strongest, there cannot but be, in the choice of children, this unceasing fluctuation. It manifests itself in their looks, gestures, thoughts, and gives them their peculiar charm and character. Yet in this primitive life is it that our power over our faculties is first revealed, and in the manner described in my last lecture, which I will now recapitulate.

Whatever the object towards which instinctive tendency impels us, and which our faculties are constrained to seek, it cannot be obtained without

difficulty; always some obstacle prevents the immediate gratification of the passion. What then? Our faculties, finding themselves made powerless by this obstacle, concentrate themselves spontaneously to overcome it; or, in other words, their united power is brought to bear on this one point, where they have encountered resistance.

Hence is the revelation of our power of control over our faculties. When, in the depths of our nature, we become conscious that our diffused powers are uniting and concentrating upon a single point, we feel at the same time that we can at will reproduce and repeat that concentration. Feeling that we have this power, we exercise it, and our sovereign force, our will, appears. Experience has revealed to us our power; but for this we should never have learned it.

In the primitive state, which I have been describing, the power of the will then first shows itself. But this power, not being directed by the reason, which as yet has not awakened, produces only transient and slight effects. When passion demands eagerly its satisfaction, and our faculties find difficulties in obtaining it, then do our powers concentrate themselves. But when a yet stronger passion summons our faculties, or when the obstacle in the way demands fatiguing exertion for its removal, the spring is relaxed, and concentration ceases. In other words, will, being as yet only instinctive, and having no rational motive on which to rely, is uncertain and vacillating; it can endure but little; its efforts

are small; it does scarcely more than show itself; and, that it may be developed and produce great results, reason must come to its aid.

Here, then, are three principles concurring to produce volition;—first, the motive power, or the primitive tendencies of our nature; second, the executive power, or our faculties; third, the governing power, or the will, that is to say, the power of directing our faculties.

A fourth principle is that which I call reason, or the power of comprehension.

I have said, gentlemen, that, when reason first appears, it finds in us the three other principles already active. From the first moment of existence, man is conscious of desires, instincts, and passions, developing within him; his faculties begin to act under the impulse of his desires, and, whenever they encounter resistance, are concentrated spontaneously—thus betraying, by their involuntary action, the fact that they may be governed. But, thus far, they have been combated only by the passions; they have been enslaved by the strongest impulse; nothing has modified or limited the empire of the instincts over them. When reason appears, this slavery ceases; for in place of an impulse of passion is substituted, not a new impulse, but—observe the word, which in all languages is the same—a *motive*. Heretofore, our actions have been determined by a blind and mechanical impulse; but, from the moment when reason appears, whether it gives counsel or imposes laws, man acts from a motive. A new

principle comes in to take part in, and modify, the process of volition. The operation of this principle I will now proceed to show.

Reason does two things. In the first place, observing what passes within us, it comprehends that all our tendencies, as they develop, demand satisfaction; and, generalizing the idea of this satisfaction, it comprehends that this is our good. On the other hand, it remarks that, when abandoned to itself, our nature succeeds but ill in attaining the highest possible satisfaction of our instincts; both because it obeys all the various impulses of our passions, and because it does not persevere sufficiently in the effort to satisfy them. Reason must introduce rules, then, into the conduct of our faculties, by ascertaining the supreme end which they should seek, and the way in which they should proceed to reach it. This reason does; on the one side it rises to the idea of self-interest well understood, and, on the other, judges of the conduct most proper to realize it. In view of this end proposed for its attainment, and of the course to be pursued, the will prepares to act, sets free our faculties from the mechanical impulse of our tendencies, and governs them. Motive takes the place of impulse, rule succeeds to force, and our conduct, from being passionate, blind, instinctive, as it was at first, becomes deliberate and rational.

Such is the first result of the appearance of reason in the process of volition.

It is plain, that, if reason had no other function than thus to comprehend the end of our tendencies,

and to decide upon the best mode of accomplishing it, there would be no law of obligation for us. We do not feel ourselves obliged to satisfy our passions. When reason places before us as an end the greatest satisfaction of our tendencies, it counsels our self-interest to obtain this satisfaction; but its advice has not an obligatory character. In other words, interest well understood, as estimated by reason, is nothing but the satisfaction of our tendencies; and never does self-interest, to any mind, come clothed in the character of obligation. Self-interest is not, indeed, a mechanical impulse of passion. It is a motive; but it is not a law.

Reason, however, does not stop at this point of self-interest. It goes further, and introduces a second rational element into our volition. This second motive is the idea of good. Interest well understood is the conception of the good or well-being of the individual, but not of good in itself, absolute good. When reason first perceives that, as there is a good for us, so is there for all creatures whatsoever, and that thus the particular good of each creature is but an element of universal order, of absolute good, then does the idea of good, so disengaged and elevated to the sphere of absolute being, appear to our reason as obligatory. A new motive to action, a new principle of conduct, is revealed and introduced. This principle is an obligatory one—a *law*. Unless this principle did thus appear, unless this idea did become thus disengaged in our minds by the effort of reason, the word *morality* would have no meaning; there would be no duties,

no rights; the science of ethics would be a vain pursuit; and our whole object in life would be to pursue the course of conduct best fitted to realize interest well understood. When I examine the opinions of those who assert that this selfish principle is the ultimate and final one, I at once see that it is impossible to deduce from self-interest any duty towards other beings. We cannot, in fact, refer to the idea of personal good an element which it does not include—the idea of the good of others; neither can we explain by it the motive which impels us to seek it.

You see, then, that four principles of our nature coöperate to produce our volitions. You see that, because two of these principles, the will and reason, are developed late, and because reason itself has two separate states, there are in human life different and distinct moral periods.

During the first of these, but two principles are active—the tendencies of our nature, or the moving power, and the faculties, or the executive power. In this period, impulse acts directly upon our faculties, and the latter cannot escape its influence.

At a later period, the empire over self commences, yet later becoming as strong as we could wish; and then, between our impulses and our faculties, comes in a power which controls the latter, and forbids them to yield to passion without its consent. But that this power, which is the will, may be able to refuse its consent to passionate impulse, it must have support. And it finds this support in a fourth prin-



ciple, which now enters; namely, a motive or reason for acting, which is not an impulse.

Reason is the source of this new element, thus introduced into the process of volition. But there are two motives successively brought in by reason. The first is only a general idea, a summary of all which the various tendencies of our nature desire, having no authority but theirs, and directing them only because it comprehends their end, and knows the best means to satisfy them. Interest well understood is the first motive that aids the will in gaining supreme control, by giving it support against the purely mechanical impulse of passion.

The second motive introduced by reason, or the second support afforded by it to the will, is much stronger. It is the idea of good in itself, an idea which is not the interest well understood of our impulses, the end of our instinctive tendencies, but an end, an interest, entirely impersonal, the universal end of the creation—absolute good, or order. It is only such an idea, such an end, such a good, that can have an obligatory character; for that which is personal, not being superior to the person, cannot in any way oblige him. The idea of law implies something exterior and superior to the person, something universal, which comprehends and controls the individual. Such is the idea of absolute good, or of universal order, to which reason ascends, and which appears to it instantly as a legitimate and obligatory motive. Henceforth, the will is not only aided to resist the mechanical impulse of passion

by interest well understood, but, resting on this idea, finds support in another yet more comprehensive and powerful motive, even that of producing good within and around us, of completing and reverencing order in the development of our own and other natures. In this idea of good is comprehended that of our own and others' good; and the realizing of these two kinds of good becomes obligatory, on the common ground that each is an element of order, or of that absolute good which is obligatory. Thus the good of another becomes an element in the determination of our volitions, and even our own good assumes a character of impersonality which it had not before. When the will finds this new source of strength, it not only becomes more powerful against mechanical impulse, but escapes altogether, if it chooses, from all motives of a personal nature. Morality now becomes possible; for the condition of all morality, which is to act from a motive or impersonal idea, or a law, is given; but, before this time, morality has had no existence whatever.

And now, gentlemen, unless I have succeeded very ill in analyzing the complex phenomenon of human volition, you must clearly comprehend both its elements and its operation. Such is the phenomenon in its threefold aspect. I have copied these outlines faithfully, I trust, from the facts of human consciousness; and, if the picture is not perfect in details, it is yet true, I am confident, in its main features and general air.

But whether we yield to the impulse of passion and instinct, or act from the motive of self-interest, or

finally obey the idea of good, we meet constantly with obstacles between ourselves and our end, which can never in this life be wholly surmounted. Hence, in every possible situation, a perpetual conflict is waged between our nature and surrounding circumstances; and this is the fundamental characteristic of the condition of humanity.

But, independently of this fundamental conflict, which is renewed in every possible moral period, each period has a conflict peculiar to itself. In the primitive state, where two principles of our nature only exercise their functions, — on the one side our tendencies, and on the other our faculties, — there is a conflict between the different tendencies of our nature; when one has supreme sway, it oppresses the others, while these in turn rise to power and subdue the first. A violent and perpetual strife goes on of necessity among our different tendencies; for each is exacting and exclusive, and often can be satisfied only by the sacrifice of the others.

In the period of self-love, not only is there a contest between our different passions, but yet another between our passions and the motive of self-interest. For we cannot direct ourselves according to the rules of self-interest, except by constraining and repressing the natural action of our different passions. Each moment must we sacrifice the strongest passion to a weaker one — a present passion to a future one, and this for the sake of our greatest interest, or an idea of our reason. There is, then, in the selfish state, a contest of motives against impulses; and we cannot sacrifice one to the other, without regretting it, if it is the

motive which is abandoned ; without pain, if it is the passion.

In the third, or moral period, properly so called, both these conflicts are continued, and a third commences between self-interest or personal good, and duty or absolute good. In a multitude of cases we must sacrifice self-interest to good in itself ; and in whatever way we may decide to act, we suffer either remorse, if we are influenced by the thought of personal good, or regret, if we sacrifice well-being to duty. The very root of all these conflicts is the fundamental one of man against nature. Were it not for this, the secondary conflicts would not arise at all ; but this is produced from the very nature of things, and from it spring the others.

Thus the province of moral volition is, if I may say so, a battle-field, where eternal war is waged. These combats make up our life itself, with all its varied griefs, and its grand fundamental evil, the strife of man with what is not himself. And yet, gentlemen, there is, nevertheless, beneath all this, the profoundest unity and harmony ; and now, having described the discord and strife of our nature, I will explain to you its accordance and peace.

Is it not true, then, that if we had the power of always directing ourselves according to the rule of self-interest, supposing this rule to have been perfectly estimated by reason, is it not true that the attainments of such self-interest would comprehend and include the greatest possible satisfaction of all our tendencies, that is to say, of all our passions ? Of this there can be no doubt ; for whenever we prefer the rule of

interest, well understood, to the mechanical impulse of passion, it is for the interests of passion itself, for the interests of our true well-being, therefore, and our greatest good. Thus, in yielding to the selfish motive, so far from sacrificing the passions, we do really serve them; in obeying it, we in fact obey our passions, that is to say, the tendencies of our nature; and the satisfaction of one implies the satisfaction of the others. There is, then, a harmony between our tendencies and the calculations of self-interest.

Experience proves that there is a like deep harmony between obedience to the law of duty and self-interest. Long has it been since philosophers, who admitted in principle the law of duty, in order to conciliate those over whom the considerations of self-interest exercised great power, have demonstrated, by experience and reasoning, that the best mode of being happy is to be faithful, in every case, to the law of duty. And, on the other hand, it has been long since those who have misconceived the nature of the law of duty have endeavored to explain it to such as denied it, by showing that the very conduct which men of elevated intelligence and consummate experience had determined to be for man's true self-interest, is precisely that which the moral law prescribes. Thus the partisans of self-interest, and those of the law of duty, have both agreed in recognizing the profound and ultimate agreement which there is between the counsels of the one and the rules of the other. And, in fact, it is impossible that it should be otherwise; for what does the law of duty advise? Its wish is, that we should fulfil our own destiny, and yet not hinder, but rather

aid others in fulfilling theirs. Now, this is just what our passions demand. Our passions are not all personal; they have not all for their object our private good; but we have also sympathetic, benevolent passions, which have for their end the good of others. When the good of others, then, is not attained — when others suffer — we suffer with them. Thus, when the emotion of pity arises in my heart, if the object of it is not solaced, I suffer; I too am unhappy. When I experience sympathy for a person — lively sympathy — if that person is unhappy, I suffer also, as with a grief of my own. Many of our primitive tendencies, then, aspire to the good of others and to the accomplishment of their destiny, as a final end. Self-interest includes, then, as a condition of our own good, the good of others. From all this you may see how profound is the harmony between the conduct which the law of duty, or the idea of absolute good, prescribes, and that recommended by enlightened self-interest, or the idea of personal good. And thus, as self-interest coincides with the satisfaction of our instinctive tendencies, it follows that each of the three motives implies the others, and that, notwithstanding conflicts on the surface, there is, as I have said, a perfect fundamental accordance. But, because they agree, they are not the less distinct; neither is it a matter of indifference which shall be obeyed. If you yield to passions, you debase yourself to the level of the brutes, for this is peculiarly their mode of volition. The nature of animals, like the nature of man, impels them to their end. They have, like ourselves, faculties by which to attain it; but no *motive* ever inter-

poses itself between the mechanical impulse of their desires and the faculties with which they are endowed for their satisfaction. When man yields to passion, then his mode of volition is wholly animal; and so long as he acts in this manner is his life that of the brute. It is only when he rises to the idea of self-interest, that he becomes a rational being; then he calculates the consequences of conduct, and becomes master of his faculties; he subjects them to a plan which he has marked out, and is now a man, though not yet a moral man; he becomes a moral being when he abandons this idea of personal good for that of absolute good; then he is moral, for he obeys a law; he rises now as much above the selfish state, as before he had done above the animal state; and, in a word, the phenomena of moral good and evil, for the first time, appear, and with them all that makes the glory and the greatness of our nature.

And now let us take a rapid review of what has been said of the different kinds of good, and thus fix, in a precise manner, our notions of them; for distinct notions on this subject are indispensable to a right understanding of all that is to follow.

I have told you, gentlemen, that good for man, as for every other creature whatsoever, is the accomplishment of his destiny; that his nature commands him forever to aspire and tend toward this; that it is this which alone can satisfy the instinctive passions. My nature is intelligent; knowledge, then, is a good for me. My nature is sympathetic; the happiness of others, then, is a good for me. Suppose that a being has neither intelligence nor sympathy; then knowledge and the welfare

of another would not be *good* to him. His nature does not seek them; they do not enter, as elements, into the final end of his being; for they are not adapted to wants of his constitution. Understand, then, what I mean by *real good*; you can determine what it is for any being when you have comprehended his nature, and learned what his nature craves.

Whenever I obtain my *real good*, I experience a *sensible good*, that is to say, pleasure. Here is a second kind of good, wholly distinct from the former; and, to produce it, two conditions must be fulfilled. First, the being must be sensitive; and, secondly, something which is a real good for that being must be attained. Agreeable sensations, pleasure, sensible good, is a consequence, effect, and sign of real good. Such is *sensible good*, or, as we usually call it, *happiness*.

Finally, there is a third kind of good, which as peculiarly belongs to moral beings as happiness does to sensitive beings; it is moral good. When my reason has discovered an obligatory motive—that is to say, a law—and my will conforms to that law, then do I experience *moral good*; and when, on the contrary, it violates that law, I experience *moral evil*. Moral good, then, is nothing else than a conformity of the volitions of a reasonable being to the law of obligation which reason prescribes. When I act from enlightened self-interest merely, there is neither moral good nor evil, except in so far as I consciously violate some commandment of the moral law.

Such are the three kinds of good and evil. You see, now, the fundamental distinctions between real



good and evil, sensible good and evil, moral good and evil, and the peculiar characteristics of each. Human nature is an impenetrable mystery to him who has not separated and distinguished three things so entirely distinct; and the explanation of false systems and erroneous doctrines is to be found in men's having confounded them.

Into each of the three states which I have described, real good and evil, and, consequently, sensible good and evil, enter; but to the third alone is moral good confined. I will recall to your minds, in passing, the fact that moral good and evil produce a sensible effect, as well as real good and evil; or, in other words, that we cannot obey a moral law, without experiencing, from that obedience, pleasure; and cannot disobey a moral law, without, as a consequence, suffering pain. Let me add that, as this pleasure and pain are accompanied by a judgment of the reason,—which says to the agent not only, "Thou hast done well or ill," but also, "Thou art worthy or unworthy,"—they are the most vivid which human sensibility is capable of feeling.

It results from this analysis, that sensible good and evil could not exist without the other kinds of good, and also that moral good and evil could not exist without real good and evil; for if we had no end, we could have no law. Real good is, then, the condition of all good for us; real evil, the condition of all evil. It is accompanied by sensible good, if the being is sensitive; by moral good, if he is rational.

Such, gentlemen, are the principal facts of our moral nature.

After what has now been said, you can easily comprehend how a person, in surveying the rules of human conduct, may allow some of the facts of our nature to escape him. You can comprehend, for example, how a man may overlook the fact that, independently of sensible impulse and enlightened self-interest, reason perceives an obligatory law as a motive to action. Admitting that a philosopher has fallen into this error, the moral period that I have described is not a real one to him. Misconceiving the facts of our nature, he mutilates them in his system, and can come but to the one conclusion, that there is no law of obligation. You can comprehend, also, how, without entire ignorance of this third mode of volition, a man may yet form an incomplete and inaccurate notion of it, and thus substitute for the true law some other, and thus, by deforming, destroy it. You can comprehend, finally, how a philosopher may form to himself such an idea of the nature of things, or of man, as to make him think it impossible, *à priori*, that man should be subject to a law of obligation, and therefore useless to search among the phenomena of his nature for such a law. Thus, for example, Hobbes, not believing in the freedom of the will, ought, *à priori*, to have declared it impossible that there should be a law of obligation, had he reasoned strictly. Thus, too, Spinoza, considering all things as necessary because emanating from God, whose being and acts are necessary, should have denied, from the high ground of his system, the possibility of duty, or rules, or law, for man.

There are three ways, therefore, in which the law of obligation, which is the foundation of ethics, may be denied; first, by asserting, *à priori*, and as a necessary consequence, from a high principle, that the existence of such a law is impossible; secondly, by overlooking, in the analysis of the moral facts of human nature, the very facts in which this law is manifested; and, lastly, by mutilating the facts, although recognizing them; thus substituting a false law of obligation for the true one.

We are now in a position to pronounce judgment upon these systems; for we are acquainted with what really passes within us. I believe that the description I have given you is faithful, although it may have been rudely expressed; for I confess to you I experience great difficulty whenever I attempt to describe in words these phenomena of our nature. Words and phrases suggest to the mind images so little resembling the phenomena of which we are conscious, that all description seems feeble and imperfect. No one feels this more deeply than I do; and yet, gentlemen, I believe that the sketch which I have drawn is, in the main, correct. At least, what I have said will enable you to comprehend how incomplete views of the moral facts of our nature have given rise to various systems; and still, how these various systems, taken together, bear witness to the real existence of all these facts; for, though each system may exhibit only one part while neglecting another, yet, together, they present a complete picture of our nature.

## LECTURE IV.

## SYSTEMS WHICH IMPLY THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF A LAW OF OBLIGATION.

## SYSTEM OF NECESSITY.

GENTLEMEN,

IN a former lecture, I have told you that the philosophical systems which, in their principles, are destructive of ethical science, may be divided into three classes: first, those which, from reasons independent of the consideration of moral phenomena, deny that there can be a law of obligation for man; second, those which, having sought for this law by an examination and analysis of moral phenomena, declare that they have not discovered it; and, lastly, those which, though professing to have found it, have yet mistaken its nature, and which, variously disfiguring it, have substituted, for such a law of obligation as reason recognizes, a false law, more or less altered from the true one, and implying no obligation.

Such are the three kinds of systems, which, directly or indirectly, destroy all right and all duty, and, consequently, the whole science of ethics.

Having, in my last two lectures, presented a

picture of the different facts which enter into the process of volition, I am now prepared—these facts having been stated—to examine the three classes of systems which I have pointed out. And I will begin with those which deny that there can be a law of obligation.

There are four chief systems, which, as a necessary and immediate consequence of their principles, deny the possibility of a law of obligation, and, consequently, that there can be any rights or duties in a proper sense. These are pantheism, mysticism, skepticism, and finally, systems denying the freedom of the will.

My design is, to take a survey of these four systems; and, by a refutation of their principles, to escape their consequence, that is to say, their denial of the possibility of ethical science.

But before entering into a detailed examination of these four systems, it may be well to point out, in a few words, the way in which they each arrive at this common result.

It is evident, in the first place, that there can be no law of obligation for a being who is not free; for it would be a contradiction in terms, to say that any obligation could rest upon a being whose actions are determined by necessity. It is needless to develop so plain a truth; you will comprehend at once, that any system which denies human liberty, does, in so doing, deny that there is or can be any law of obligation.

This is equally true, in my opinion, of all systems of pantheism; whose doctrine is, that there is but one being, self-existent, necessary, whom pantheists,

equally with deists, call God. If there is but one being, there can be nothing in the universe but different modes of his existence. Men, all things animate or inanimate, which make up the creation, are only various modes and different manifestations of this one being; all causality is, therefore, in him; therefore no causality exists in his creatures; and where there is no causality, of course there is no free-will.

The consequence, then, of every pantheistic system, is the denial of all free-will in the creation, and of course in man. It is only through an inconsistency, therefore, that some pantheists have believed that they could recognize these two things; and have professed the twofold doctrine of the unity of being (which is the first principle of pantheism) and of human liberty.

As to the skeptical systems, they are of two kinds. The one class deny that certainty in knowledge is possible, on the ground that human opinions are every where contradictory; the other class, passing by this contradictory character of human opinions as a matter open for debate, question whether what appears to us truth is really truth in itself, for the reason that the perceptions and conceptions of our intelligence result from the very organization of that intelligence. They assert that we cannot prove that, if we had been differently organized, our views and conceptions would not have been different from those which we now have, or that what now appears to us true, might not then have seemed false, and *vice versa*.

Such are the two forms of skepticism; and both one

and the other lead to the same result — that man can be certain of nothing. If this is so, then, when we believe that we see, in a conception of our reason, a practical obligation to conform our conduct to it, this view may be as uncertain as any other, and we cannot put faith in it. It is, then, a matter of doubt whether we are obliged to do any thing whatsoever, and whether that which we call *good* or *ill* is really so. It is quite a matter of indifference, then, whether we respect this obligation or not.

Every system of skepticism, from whatever principle it originates, necessarily ends in throwing doubt over every idea of obligation, and consequently in a denial of human obligation.

Mysticism yet remains to be considered. I admit that there are various kinds of mysticism. But there is one chief mystical system, which is the source of all others: its leading principle is, that man cannot, in this world, attain his end; that he is, whatever he may attempt, powerless for good; and that, therefore, the only thing for him to do is to wait till the obstacles which impede him are removed, and till the human soul, set free from its present bonds, be transported into such another order of things as will permit him to accomplish his destiny. For one who thinks thus, all action appears absurd, and a passive state is the only reasonable one. Let man await the time when the hand of God shall deliver him from the bondage of his present condition; then will there be a sphere for action; but until then let him live passive, leave things to take care of themselves, and abandon himself

to the current of fate. Any other course of conduct would be an inconsistency; and the existence of any obligation, therefore, is impossible.

Thus you see how the four systems of necessity, pantheism, skepticism, and mysticism, equally deny that there can be any law of obligation for man.

After this summary review, I will now proceed to take up these systems successively, in order that we may examine more in detail the foundations upon which they rest; and, by showing you the falseness of the principle, I shall attempt to destroy the consequences which have been drawn from them. Let us begin with the system of necessity.

The number of philosophers who have thought that man is not a free being, is very great; but they have not all arrived at their conclusion in the same way. They have professed the doctrine of necessity, in view of different principles, and through various courses of reasoning. The common characteristic among these systems of necessity, by which they must be classified, is, as I have shown, that they all end in denying the possibility of any law of obligation.

I will describe the different reasons which have led philosophers to this strange denial of human liberty, and will endeavor briefly to refute them in succession. You can readily see that, as my wish is to come as soon as possible to a positive exposition of the laws of human conduct, I cannot give much time to a description or a refutation of these doctrines. As I am addressing myself to an intelligent audience, and as the system of necessity is in evident contradiction to the universal faith and the acknowledged facts of



human nature, a simple description of its leading traits will enable me to refute the reasonings of its advocates.

The first mode of denying human liberty which I shall describe, is one which overlooks our true liberty, and substitutes a fictitious one. This is what has been done by Hobbes. Hobbes confined himself to that signification of the word *liberty*, in which we all employ it, when we say of a man who was just now chained, but is set free, that he is at liberty. When a man is chained, he can will any act, but he cannot execute his will. The constraint is not on his power of willing, but on his power of acting. In a word, action, which naturally and immediately follows volition, is, for the time, impossible.

Hobbes understands by *liberty*, the power of doing what we will; and well may he say, therefore, that human liberty is limited; for it is evident enough that we can will a multitude of things which we cannot possibly execute. Within the limits of what we can possibly do, we are free; but no further. This is liberty, as Hobbes has defined it; and he asserts that there is and can be no other.

To support such a doctrine, is to deny, to all intents and purposes, that man is a free being. If by *liberty* is understood an absence of any such external constraint as prevents the exercise of any power within the natural limits of that power, then every being endowed with any power whatsoever is equally free with man; animals are free; vegetative force is free, rivers as they run, winds as they blow, are free. Now, this, evidently, is not what we mean by the

freedom of any power. The question of liberty or necessity turns altogether upon the mode in which any power is determined in its action; not upon the fact that there are limits, wider or narrower, to its exercise. In such a sense of the word, no part of our nature is less free than the power of acting. In truth, the necessary law of our being is, that a resolve of the will, when directed to what can possibly be accomplished, should be immediately followed by the act which executes it, and realizes the intent of the will. There is a necessary connection between willing and acting, if the thing willed can be done. If, then, by liberty is meant the power of doing what we will, *liberty* is ascribed to a power, whose very characteristic is necessary action. For the act, by which we fulfil a resolve, is a necessary consequence of that volition. If, then, Hobbes, supposing that he thereby preserves the freedom of the will, demonstrates or thinks that he demonstrates to his own mind, that the will has no liberty to form what resolves it chooses, but that all its resolves are determined by necessity, you can readily comprehend how, by thus denying liberty where it really exists, and admitting it where it does not, he does actually destroy it altogether.

I trust that you have a clear conception of this system. There is but one answer to it. Hobbes has placed our freedom where it does not exist, where we are not conscious of it; where, on the contrary, we are perfectly conscious of necessity. If it is true that, in common language, we do use the word *liberty* sometimes to denote our power of doing what we purpose, it is merely to describe a state opposed to

that in which the power of acting is for the moment suspended by external constraint. It is in this sense only that we, by analogy, call this state a state of *liberty*. But when we enter into ourselves, we feel clearly, that the necessary consequence of every resolve, when that resolve is directed to any thing within our power, is the act putting that resolve in execution; and that in this part of our nature there is, therefore, no liberty. If it sometimes does happen that, after having willed an act, we yet do not perform it, observe, it is always because in place of that first resolve is substituted an opposite one, destroying it; so that doing the act or refraining from it, are immediate, necessary, plain consequences of the last resolve we form. Wherein, then, does our liberty really consist? In our power of forming resolves. When we make a resolution, is it only the necessary consequence of some previous processes in our minds? or does it arise from the power which we have of forming this or that resolve, just as we choose, after having considered whether it is right or wrong, expedient or inexpedient, pleasant or painful? This is the question, and the real point to be discussed.

Another system, equally denying human liberty, has arisen from a different confusion of language. It is the system of Hume. Consider for a moment this philosopher's idea of a cause, in which, by the way, may be found the very basis of his skepticism.

As you well know, it is the object of students of physical science, of medical men and chemists, of all who seek to discover the laws of nature, to determine the circumstances which constantly precede the

appearance of any phenomenon or effect. When these circumstances are determined, a law of nature is discovered; and we can draw from the knowledge of this law many important rules for conduct. We are taught by it, that, whenever the circumstances occur, this event will follow; and, conversely, that whenever it does happen, these circumstances have preceded it. This is of great importance in determining the direction of our actions, and gives man immense advantage over the blind forces of nature. As we never can reach beyond ourselves to a perception of the true cause of any effect, because out of ourselves these causes are invisible, we are limited to a statement of the circumstances which have constantly preceded the phenomenon, instead of seeking for the causes which have really produced it; and as, in the minds of students of physical science, the efficient and unknown cause which produces a phenomenon is not confounded with the circumstances which have been observed to precede and accompany it, for convenience and brevity we are accustomed to say that these circumstances are the cause. The assertion of Hume is, that we have no other idea of a cause than this; and he supports his assumption thus:—

All our knowledge, according to Hume, originates in experience. If this is admitted, he must go on to explain, by experience alone, the formation of all the notions which are found in human intelligence; the idea of cause is one. Hume is bound to explain how this idea has entered the mind, whether from the senses or from consciousness. Now, as it is a fact that the senses can never reach beyond phenomena to causes,

and as Hume thinks that consciousness also can perceive phenomena only, it is plain that, if this metaphysical doctrine is once adopted, it becomes impossible to explain the true notion of a cause, such as we find it in our minds.

But there is a sense of the word *cause* before referred to, which this system is competent to explain. Though consciousness and sensation can never perceive causes, still, according to Hume, they can at least perceive the circumstances which have preceded the appearance of any effect. Meeting with this sense of the word, explicable by his system, Hume adopts it; and, being unable to account for any other idea expressed by the word according to his hypothesis, he declares that this is the only notion which the word *cause* really represents to the human mind. Thus, for Hume, a cause is merely the aggregate of circumstances constantly preceding in nature the production of any effect.

This being so, it is perfectly plain that nobody can in any case be entirely sure of what is the cause of any effect. Hume remarks, in fact, and with much reason, that, however constant may be the concurrence of certain circumstances with a fact, reason always distinctly comprehends that a possible case may arise, where this concurrence will cease, and where, consequently, what now seems to us the cause will cease. This is one reason why we can never be certain that what we call the cause of a phenomenon is the true cause.

In the next place, Hume remarks, and with as good reason, that observation cannot detect, among the cir-

cumstances which constantly precede the appearance of a phenomenon, the efficient force which has produced it. We see, in fact, certain circumstances; we see, next, a phenomenon: but the assumed fact of the production of this phenomenon by the circumstances which precede it escapes us entirely; and, if it always thus escapes us, we have no means of knowing whether it really happens. Thus the idea of causation as commonly understood, or, what comes to the same thing, the idea of the production of an effect by a cause, is and can only be an illusion of the human mind. The idea of concurrence observed between two facts,—this, according to Hume, is what the idea of causation in our minds really reduces itself to. Any thing more is an illusion and prejudice. Consequently, there is no such thing as a cause, in the common sense of that word; and, consequently, no such thing as an effect. There is nothing more in nature than a recurrence of phenomena, which precede and follow each other with some degree of constancy, but which in no case should be considered by us as eternal or necessary.

You see that the necessary consequence of such a doctrine is to destroy such ideas of cause and effect, and of their relation, as exist in the minds of all men; and that, therefore, any consideration of the question whether human causality, or the *me*, is free or not, is vain and idle. We may well discuss the question, if we consider human causality a true cause, really producing the acts which the man performs. But, if we assume that the causality of

this me is an illusion, the question becomes absurd; for it amounts to this: Is an efficient cause, which has no existence, free or not free? Hume does not admit the consideration of this question of human liberty at all, then; to him it is only trifling and foolish. I speak here of his metaphysics only; for, as to his moral philosophy, it is, like that of many other philosophers,—and like that of Spinoza even, the most strict and logical mind of modern times,—at variance with his metaphysical system. To conceive it possible that there can be any morality at all, we must admit, in the outset, and first of all, the very thing which Hume's metaphysics deny, namely, that we are causes. For, destroy this first and indispensable consideration, and it evidently becomes most absurd to inquire what the laws of human action should be, or what conduct should be recommended for man to pursue.

Such, gentlemen, in a few words, is the metaphysical doctrine of Hume. It can be answered in a most simple way, by saying that the human mind has ideas of cause and effect, and of their relation, which are wholly irreconcilable with it. The system of Hume, therefore, which pretends to explain all our ideas, is false.

A second reply to Hume is yet more direct. As a matter of fact, we feel that we are the cause of the acts which we produce. Thus, when I walk, I feel that I cause the motion of my limbs; when I think, when I fix my attention, when I reflect, I feel that I cause these acts of thought, attention, and reflection, which I perform. It is true that we

have no idea of cause, if consciousness perceives nothing more within us than sensation does in that; for it is certain that, out of ourselves, we cannot go beyond phenomena—we cannot reach to causes. But, when we attend not to what passes without, but to what passes within, we discover in ourselves, by consciousness, a cause, which does produce effects; and we have, whenever we experience this inward feeling, the feeling of cause, the feeling of effect, and the feeling of the production of the effect by the cause. Thus, for example, when I pay attention, I have the feeling of the me, which pays attention,—of the phenomenon of attention thence resulting,—and, finally, I feel that it is I, myself, who, as the cause, have produced this effect of attention. It is clear that a system, which denies all these facts, cannot explain the idea of cause. But, to conclude from this that the idea does not exist in the human mind, is to submit the mind to the laws of a false system, which philosophy has invented. The mind has the idea of cause; and for this reason, that it experiences in itself the feeling of a cause which does produce effects.

If only such opinions as these, which I have now refuted, had been brought against the faith in human freedom, the question would never have been seriously agitated by many minds. We must renounce the most familiar notions of good sense and experience; before we can admit these opinions of Hume and Hobbes which I have described; and, therefore, they are only partially dangerous. The strongest objections against human liberty come from



a system whose leading principle is wholly different. This system is complicated enough; that is, it opposes many objections to the doctrine of human liberty. These objections, however, are all connected with one main idea, which is this — that the motives from which the will makes up its volitions, really constrain the will to choose, and consequently destroy its freedom; in other words, the doctrine which I am now about to exhibit to you does not admit that man is a free being, because it thinks that acts of will are, in every case whatsoever, the necessary effect of motives preceding the volition.

The principal propositions of the supporters of this system are as follows: In the first place, they assert, as a fact, that every volition has a motive. In the second place, they say that, if the motive which acts upon the will is a simple and single one, the motive will necessarily determine it; but, if there are several motives operating at the same time, the strongest will determine it. Such, gentlemen, is the argument of the friends of this system. To point out the fallacy of such reasoning, we must take up and answer separately its different assumptions.

Perhaps one might, with Reid, deny the fact that all the resolves of the will have a motive. Reid states facts to support this position. He says that we often form trifling resolves without the slightest consciousness of having any motive; and, to the objection immediately raised, that the motive has acted insensibly on the will, he answers, that it is not then a motive, as a motive is a reason for acting, conceived beforehand, and acting on the will. A

motive which is not conceived of, that is to say, of which I have no consciousness, says Reid, is as if it was no motive—as if it did not exist. It is a contradiction, then, to say that a motive has acted on my will, and yet that I have been unconscious of it. Again, says Reid, I am placed in situations where different means to a certain end present themselves—means which will equally conduct me to it; now, if, in such a case, I select one rather than the others, it is without any motive whatsoever. For example, I owe a guinea to a person who has come for payment, and there are in my purse twenty guineas; why do I select one rather than another? Reid asserts that there is in such a case no motive whatever. He acknowledges that such actions are of no importance in a moral point of view. But he remarks that the question is simply to know whether it is possible that the will should ever make a choice without any motive; and, if any such instances can be brought forward, however few or trifling, we may still answer the question in the affirmative.

These are subtle trains of reasoning, and different minds will form different opinions as to their importance. For myself, I leave aside this discussion, and prefer, in a consideration of the subject which must be very rapid, to limit myself to decisive arguments.

I will admit, then, at the outset, that we never do act without a motive. This being granted, the question resolves itself into this: Is a motive something which constrains or compels my volition?

Now, in my opinion, this assumed constraint is contradicted by experience, and by our feeling of what passes within us when we form a purpose. In fact, if there is one familiar feeling, of which we are distinctly and vividly conscious, it surely is that which we experience when we make a choice. Whatever the force of the motive which we obey, we yet perceive a wide distinction between the influence of this motive and any thing which can be called constraint. Indeed, we feel distinctly that, in yielding to this motive, that is to say, in resolving in conformity with it, we are entirely able not to form this resolve. If, for instance, when standing at a window, I determine not to throw myself into the street, I feel that it depends wholly upon myself to form an opposite determination; only I say I should then be a fool; and, being rational, I remain where I am. But that I am free to be a fool, and to throw myself down, is to me most evident. If any of my audience are capable of confounding in their minds the fact, that a billiard-ball on a table is put in motion by a stroke, with the fact, that a volition is produced in my mind when I seek to know what is my reasonable course of conduct, and think I discover it,—if there are any here, who can see a similarity between the action of one ball on another, and the influence of a motive on my volition,—then have I nothing more to say. But no one can imagine a similarity between the two; at least, no one, who has not taken sides on the question, and given up his mind to some system, of which it is a consequence that some necessity must control

our volition and acts, can confound two facts in their nature so dissimilar as the action of one ball upon another, and the influence of a motive on the determinations of my will. The law, that every motion in material bodies is proportioned to the moving force which produced it, supposes a fact; namely, the *inertia* of matter. To apply this law to the relation which subsists between the resolutions of my will, and the motives which act upon it, is to suppose that my being, that I, myself, am not a cause; for a cause is something which produces an act by its own proper power. That which is inert is not a cause; it may receive and transmit an impulse, but it cannot originate it. Are we, or are we not, a cause? Have we, or have we not, a power in ourselves of producing certain acts? It would seem necessary for us to decide this question, before we can rightly apply the law of external phenomena to internal operations. Admitting, then, that every volition has a motive, as the advocate of the scheme of necessity asserts, — admitting even with him, that, whenever the will is addressed by only one motive, its volitions are always in conformity with it, — it by no means follows that this proves the truth of his system. It proves only this, that our will forms no volition without a reason for forming it; and that, when there is but one reason to be considered, it wills accordingly. But it by no means follows, that, whenever our will yields to a reason, it is compelled to do so by that reason. The whole question, — and I beg you again to remark it, — depends upon a fact which you must determine —

upon the fact whether you know that the influence, which the motive exercises over the will, is a constraining force or not. For myself, I say that my inward feeling answers in the negative; and that, under the influence of all motives, I retain, in every case, a distinct consciousness of a power of acting in opposition to what they advise and direct. I can admit, then, without difficulty, the two first propositions of the advocates of necessity. They prove nothing against the liberty of the will.

But I should not neglect to inform you, that Reid disputes the second of these propositions as he did the first, and does not admit, even in those cases in which only one motive addresses itself to our will, that we always decide conformably to the motive. He draws an argument from common language, and asks whether we have not such words as *caprice*, *obstinacy*, *wilfulness*, and whether they have no meaning. And what do they mean, if not that we resolve, at any given moment, in spite of, and in opposition to, all motives then acting on our will? These words bear witness to the fact that sometimes, under the influence of a single motive, we do not form any volition, or do not will conformably to the motive. But I repeat, I have not the time to enter into these arguments of secondary importance; I limit myself to the statement of direct and decisive reasonings.

Let us pass now, gentlemen, to the cases in which many motives act simultaneously upon the will; and let us consider them for a moment, not for the purpose of discovering whether it is true that the strongest motive always determines our volition,—

for even were it true, I have already answered the objection,—but to observe and wonder at the false logic, and confused notions, into which the advocates of necessity fall, in attempting to explain what takes place within our minds. .

It is the strongest motive, say they, which determines the will. What is this strongest motive, I ask, and how do you measure the comparative force of motives? Is that the strongest motive, according to your idea, which determines the volition? If this is so, you are arguing in a circle; and, instead of showing that it is the strongest motive which decides the will, you are merely saying that, as the determination of the will is in conformity with such or such a motive, therefore this motive is the strongest. Arguing in this way, there certainly is reason enough for saying that the strongest motive determines the will, since that is designated as the strongest which does determine it. It is impossible, therefore, to judge, from effects in the scheme of necessity, of the relative force of motives.

But, if we cannot judge from effects, we must find some common measure by which to decide. Let us inquire, then, what this measure can be.

You understand, gentlemen, after the description given in former lectures, that there are two kinds of moving powers acting upon us; first, the impulses of instinct, or passion; and, secondly, the conceptions of reason. Thus, when I am excited to act from sympathy for another, this impulse is a simple natural emotion—a *momentum*; when, on the other hand, I am led to this act from the consideration that it is

conformable to duty or self-interest, this consideration is a conception of reason — a *motive*, properly speaking. That these two kinds of moving powers can and do act efficiently upon my volitions, there can be no doubt; it is evident that my resolves are often the consequence of a perception of my duty or interest; and it is no less evident that often, also, they are the issue of my desires, passions, and natural impulses. Suppose, now, that, in a given case, motives of both kinds act simultaneously, and in an opposite direction upon my will, and I say there is not, and cannot be, any common measure between them.

And, now, on what grounds can we declare, that a conception of the reason, or a conception of interest, which leads me to any act, is a stronger motive than the present passion, which impels me to do the opposite? As one of these motives is a passion, and the other an idea, I find a difficulty in comparing them; and I challenge the most ingenious to find a common measure, which can be applied to two things in their nature so different, or which can direct me to a true appreciation of their relative forces.

Of two impulses, manifestly unequal, it would be easy to determine the stronger: a vehement desire is distinguishable in our consciousness from one less so. And thus, merely from their vivacity and fervor, we may often recognize the stronger from the weaker passion. There is, then, if you choose to say so, a common measure between different impulses of our sensitive nature, which are peculiarly distinguished as *emotions*. On the other hand, of different courses of conduct which reason and self-interest bring into

contrast, I may see, that one is much more advantageous than another. There is, then, if you please, a means of comparing together different suggestions of self-interest : the suggestion which promises the most for my interest should have the most power over me. In the same way, among different duties which may present themselves to my judgment, there may be one which appears more obligatory than another ; for there are duties of different degrees of importance, and in many cases I must sacrifice the lesser to the greater. I perceive, then, that, strictly speaking, there is a possibility of comparing together the relative force of different motives originating from duty, and of different motives suggested by self-interest, or, finally, of different desires striving within me at a given moment. But between a desire on the one hand, and a conception of interest or of duty on the other, where, I ask, can you find a standard of comparison ? If I assume passion as the measure, then, evidently, passion will appear the stronger motive ; but if, on the other hand, I assume interest or duty as the measure, then desire becomes nothing, and duty or interest seems all in all. It depends, then, wholly upon the measure of comparison which I adopt, whether this or the other motive is strongest ; which proves that there is no common measure of comparison to be applied at all times to these different kinds of motives, when we would estimate their relative force.

Thus, in truth, in almost every case, to say that we yield to the strongest motive, is to say what has no meaning ; for in most cases it is impossible to determine the strongest motive. If I will to be prudent,



I follow the motive of self-interest; if I will to be virtuous, I follow the motive of duty; if I will to be neither prudent nor virtuous, I follow passion; and in proportion as I yield to passion, to enlightened interest, or to duty, does the merit of my conduct vary. And here is a marvel for the advocate of necessity, and something which, in the sincerity of his conviction, he well may wonder at. I, who am not free, — who, whatever resolution I have taken, have yet been fatally determined to take it by the strongest motive, — I feel that I am responsible for this resolution; and others, too, regard me as responsible; so that, according as I have been impelled to this or that act, do I believe myself to have merit or demerit, and pass sentence on myself as reasonable or unreasonable, prudent or foolish; and, in a word, apply to myself, although I have yielded necessarily to the strongest motive, certain expressions and names, all implying most decisively and forcibly that I was free to yield or resist, to take, at my option, this or the other course, and, consequently, that this, so called, strongest motive did not, after all, determine my act. Here, I repeat, is that which may well excite the astonishment of the advocates of necessity, and which they should do their best to explain.

You see that this doctrine, seemingly so simple and natural that, among many motives acting upon us, the strongest inevitably determines our volition, is so far from being simple, that it really becomes incomprehensible the moment we examine it more closely.

When I attempt thus to bring argument against

argument, for the sake of proving that we are free, and that motives do not exercise a controlling force over us, I feel as uncomfortable as if I were answering one who should deny our power of moving or walking. To employ arguments in refuting such an opinion seems like some game of logic; for I have to oppose to this opinion a plain and decisive fact—a fact, the consciousness of which I can never lose, and which is in accordance with common forms of speech in all languages, with the universal faith, and with the established practices of mankind. And I smile to think, that, when I can utterly destroy the system of necessity, by merely bringing it in conflict with this fact, I should yet be seeking superfluous trains of reasoning to oppose it with. This fact, which we cannot escape from, is one which consciousness bears witness to, when placed under the influence of the strongest possible motive, say self-preservation. I feel distinctly that it depends upon myself, and only upon myself, whether I shall yield to or resist this motive, and do or refrain from what it recommends. I can conceive, indeed, that a man may, in good faith, deny this evident fact; for to what lengths of delusion will not the spirit of theory and system carry us? But I will ask him, am I not justified in not admitting this peculiar opinion of a small body of men, when I see that even they act and speak as if they agreed in my opinion; when I see the most logical among them form a scheme of ethics, and give rules for conduct; when I find in every tongue the words *right* and *duty*, *punishment* and *reward*, *merit* and *demerit*; when the whole human race agree in being indignant against him who does

wrong, and in admiring him who does right; when, indeed, there is not an event in human life, which does not imply necessarily, and in a thousand different ways, this very freedom of will of which I feel so sensibly and deeply conscious? I have certainly some right to feel strengthened in my opinion by so many testimonies to its truth, and by its perfect accordance with what I see about me. And, were there no stronger objections against the doctrine which denies human freedom, than this universal contradiction which it offers to all human belief, conduct, and language, to all judgments and feelings, it would, even then, be more completely answered than it deserves.

I pass now to another argument against the freedom of the will, which I will endeavor to set before you in the simplest form.

If, it is said, man is really free; if he is not necessarily determined on every occasion by the strongest motive, — all the calculations which we make as to men's conduct would be ridiculous, and there would be no means of anticipating a result. And, in fact, to admit that man is a free being, is to admit that his resolutions, and consequently his actions, are not the consequence of the motives which influence his will. Now, when I seek to foresee what a man's conduct will be in any given circumstances, I begin with considering the motives which ought to influence his actions; I calculate the relative force of these motives, and, when I have found, as I think, the strongest, I conclude, without hesitation, that he will pursue the course which this motive prescribes. It is plain that this

reasoning, so constantly repeated, implies the truth of the doctrine that the motives do determine necessarily the volition, and that, of different motives, the strongest does determine the choice.

I will begin by the remark, that this reasoning upon the future conduct of men, even when we are perfectly sure of all the motives which will be presented to them when making their decision, carries with it by no means the same feeling of certainty with which we form our calculations as to physical events, whose laws of operation are known. When a law of nature is known, it is with complete certainty that we predict phenomena which will occur under that law; but instead of this, when we try to form a calculation as to the resolution that a man will come to under certain circumstances, the motives which can operate upon him being all supposed known, our reasoning never goes further than to a judgment on *probabilities*; and, in fact, nothing is more common in such cases than to find by the event that we were deceived. I might avail myself advantageously of this uncertainty, as making in favor of my opinion, and account for it in part by the very fact of human freedom, which the advocates of necessity deny. But I will not do this. I prefer rather to ascribe this uncertainty altogether to two most evident and unquestionable causes; first, that we can never foresee what motive among the many which may influence his conduct, will present themselves to the agent; and, secondly, that, having no measure of his sensibility, his selfish passions, or conscientiousness, we cannot calculate what motive will be the strongest. I will admit, then, that these two

causes are the only ones which render our foresight of conduct uncertain. But what follows? What consequence is to be drawn from this? This only, that, if we could know all the motives which will act upon a man's will, and, moreover, which among these motives will be the strongest, we could predict with certainty his conduct; that is to say, — to express it as it should be expressed, — if we could know all the motives which will act upon him, and the motive that will determine his choice, we should know what his resolve will be. We could predict his resolution beforehand, if we knew what it was! Upon this condition, uncertainty as to the acts of our fellow-beings would disappear. All this it is easy enough to conceive of; but does it not prove that the attempt to trace a similarity between volitions and events in the physical world is only a foolish playing upon words and nonsense?

Two things are certain, gentlemen: first, that we cannot foresee, except in a limited degree, the volition of our fellow-beings in any given circumstance; secondly, that such anticipations can never, even in the most favorable circumstances, rise above a high probability. Does this limited power of foresight of actions imply that man is not free? or is it reconcilable with the fact of human liberty? This is the question. Now, suppose a being who is perfectly master of himself, — that is to say, who has the power of disposing his faculties, directing them, and, consequently, of governing his conduct; place such a being in circumstances where there are two courses to be pursued — one evidently unpromising, the other

encouraging—and give him intelligence sufficient to see and comprehend this;—precisely because he is free, is it not probable, and almost certain, that he will use his freedom, that is to say, his power, of governing his conduct, in such a way as to avoid the course which threatens evil, and choose that which promises advantage? Without doubt. Thus supposing him free, we can form very probable conjectures as to his conduct. I ask, now, whether all the conjectures which we do or can form as to the actions of our fellow-beings, are not of this kind? They are, then, wholly compatible with a belief in human freedom. More than this, they really imply and suppose it; for they begin always with the supposition that the being is reasonable, and that he will therefore perceive the most agreeable, the most useful, or the most proper course of conduct; which implies that, after he has thus discovered what it is, he will be free to follow it. For where would be the good in reason's seeing the right, if there was no liberty of acting accordingly? I ask, again, is this the way in which we reason, when we attempt to foresee the operation of forces acting from necessity, as winds, waters, the atmosphere? Which, then, do our conjectures as to human actions imply, their liberty or necessity?

It is a matter of daily experience, that we resist the force of different motives originating in duty, self-love, or passion. Would such resistance, which cannot be denied, be possible in a being whose volitions were a necessary consequence of the action of motives or impulses? Does not this single fact

of resistance prove, on the contrary, that it is not by motives, as a cause, that volitions are produced, as the effect, but from the me, as a true cause, which deliberates before determining? and that, therefore, I am subject only to the influence, and nowise to the constraining force, of motive? But enough, and too much, on this subject. Let us pass to another form of the argument for necessity—the last which I shall offer to your consideration.

I take up, as you perceive, only the principal arguments by which the scheme of necessity is supported; because, if I should attempt to consider all the weak as well as strong, the incidental as well as leading ones, the limits of a lecture would be too narrow. I confine myself, therefore, simply to an exposition of the most important of these reasonings, and give to each as brief a discussion as possible.

There are philosophers who have denied the freedom of the will, chiefly on the ground that, if men were free, they would be incapable of being subject to control or government; and, as a matter of fact, say they, how are men governed? The condition of their being governed is, that the rewards and punishments which excite hope or fear should operate necessarily upon their volition; for, if they do not act necessarily, that is to say, if their wills are free, it is evident that they cannot be governed. Do not complain of the weakness of this argument. I find it as weak as you do. It is not my duty, however, to strengthen the positions of the system I am attacking.

In such reasoning as this, there is a manifest

sophistry and confusion of language. Government, as you well know, is of two kinds—physical and moral. Physical government acts by constraint, moral government by influence. If I have some puppets before me, and hold in my hand the strings which are attached to their limbs, I may truly be said to govern the puppets; there is nothing contradictory in the expression; yet every one feels that the expression is metaphorical. We say, too, that the puppets obey the impulse which I communicate to them; but we feel here, too, that this word *obedience* has a metaphorical sense, as the word *government* had before.

To pretend that men, before they can be subject to government, must be influenced in their actions by those who govern them, as puppets are by him who pulls the wires, is an opinion as utterly opposed to common sense as can well be imagined. The fact is, that when a legislator threatens with penalties those who infringe a law, or promises rewards to those who obey it, he has no thought of constraining, as with physical force, the will of those to whom he offers this twofold sanction of the law; his only intention is to give rise to hopes and fears which may, in the case proposed, act as motives on their volition. He takes men as they are; he shows them, if he is wise and just, what is their true duty, their real interest; he calls this a law; and then, to enforce the obligation which this duty imposes, and strengthen the desire which their interests awaken, he superadds promises and threats. Does this imply that he considers men as puppets? Just the contrary. If he thought men ma-



chines, he would not attempt to enforce the law by exhibiting to them its justice or expediency ; for these conceptions of the reason do not act like material forces, by necessary impulsion. He would not menace them with penalties, he would not promise reward ; for menaces and promises act only through the medium of reason and passion, and not as a constraining force. This is the way in which he who would govern men attempts it ; and when he secures their obedience, he knows that it is in this way he has done it ; and herein is discovered the true and proper meaning of the words *government* and *obedience*. These words, in their proper acceptation, imply the liberty of the subject of government ; and it is only in a metaphorical sense that we employ them when we speak of governing the puppets, or of their obeying us. Whoever, then, asserts that there can be no such thing as government, if man is a free being, places himself in direct opposition to common forms of speech, and to the only true meaning of these very words, *government* and *obedience*, which, far from excluding the idea of the liberty of the governed, necessarily implies it, and never could have been invented without this idea of liberty.

Such is the difference between physical and moral government. No man of common sense can fail to perceive a distinction which is clear as the day. To influence and to compel are two wholly dissimilar acts. To be subject to influence, a being must be supposed to have the faculties of comprehension and of choice — in a word, freedom of will. Compulsion supposes nothing of the kind. We compel beings who have no intelligence, no freedom of choice. We

influence beings who are endowed with these capacities. Suppress the ideas of liberty and of intelligence, and the word *influence* has no legitimate sense in which it can be applied, any more than the words *government*, or *obedience*, or a thousand others, with which all languages are filled, and which are all genuine products of our moral nature.

Do not ascribe this long discussion, into which I have entered, to any fear of disastrous consequences upon the mind of our age from this system of necessity. I am entirely at ease on that subject. And by what I have said, I do not suppose that I have either strengthened or weakened your clear conviction and profound consciousness of moral freedom. But these ideas, which we have been considering, enter into great systems of philosophy taught by distinguished men; and therefore it has been impossible wholly to pass them by. As you well know, a warm controversy was raised, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, by the most celebrated philosophers of that era, in which Clarke, Leibnitz, Collins, following Hobbes and Spinoza, whose strange doctrines had disturbed all the notions of common sense, took part. This controversy was a great event at the time; it seemed as if man's moral freedom would perish utterly, if it could not be saved from some empty sophisms. The result, however, was, that facts were so firmly established, the meaning of words so accurately fixed, and questions, before confounded in most minds, so separated and disengaged, that the work of establishing for the freedom of the will the same place in science that it

had always held in common sense became comparatively easy. By the mass of mankind this doctrine is never doubted; their words, acts, and thoughts, prove that they admit it without a question.

## LECTURE V.

## SYSTEM OF MYSTICISM.

GENTLEMEN,

OF the four great systems implying the impossibility of a law of human obligation, I have, in my last lecture, exhibited the first—the system of necessity. You have seen this system under three different forms; that is to say, as arriving, by three different ways, at the common conclusion, that man is not a free being. Hobbes, displacing liberty from its rightful sphere, and denying that it exists where only it is to be found, while falsely affirming its existence elsewhere, preserves the name, while he destroys the reality. Hume gives up both; for, by destroying the idea of an efficient cause altogether, he makes it impossible that the question of liberty should be discussed at all. Other philosophers, too numerous to be named, arrive at the same result, by asserting that motives necessarily determine the will. Such are the three forms, under which I have successively exhibited the system of necessity, and which I have in turn endeavored to refute. I would here leave the consideration of this system, and pass

immediately to the system of mysticism, which I proposed as the subject of this lecture, were there not, among the forms under which the doctrine of necessity has been advocated, yet a fourth, sufficiently famous and remarkable to demand some consideration. I will give you a rapid sketch of it, and then pass to the system of mysticism, which, as I have said, will be the subject of the present lecture.

This fourth form of the doctrine of necessity is that which is based upon the seeming incompatibility of human freedom with divine foreknowledge. This is the argument of its advocates. There is but one alternative: either man is free, and then it must be impossible to foresee his volitions, or else his volitions can be foreseen, and then it is impossible that he should be free. We must sacrifice our belief in human freedom, or our faith in divine foreknowledge. We can choose for ourselves; but, for themselves, the advocates of this system do not hesitate to give up the idea of human liberty.

I remark, in the first place, that philosophy is by no means obliged to give a full explanation of all things—and for this very good reason, that the human mind being limited, it cannot explain all things. Philosophy does not explain, and is not bound to explain, more than the human mind can comprehend. The boundary of human comprehension is the boundary of philosophy. She has no need of carrying her explanation further. Supposing, then, that the mind cannot reconcile human liberty with the *à priori* conception of the foreknowledge of God,

it by no means follows that the fact of human liberty, or that the conception of the divine foreknowledge, should be sacrificed; it only follows that the mind, comprehending the idea that God must foresee the future, and finding, on the other hand, the fact that man is free, is not able to explain how these two facts can be reconciled.

The only condition which can make it necessary for us to sacrifice our faith either in human liberty or in divine foreknowledge, is, that there is an absolute contradiction between these two ideas; such a contradiction as there would be between the two propositions, two and two make four, two and two do not make four. In this case, gentlemen, but in this case only, where reason distinctly perceives it to be impossible that what we conceive of God and what we feel in ourselves should both be absolutely true, should we be bound to sacrifice the conception to the fact, or the fact to the conception; for then, and then only, would all chance of reconciling the conflicting evidence on which they rest be destroyed.

Suppose, for a moment, that this was really the case; then, for myself, I say, that, forced in this supposed extremity to choose, I should feel bound to sacrifice my faith in divine foreknowledge.

The fact of human liberty is something of which we are much more certain than we can be of divine foreknowledge. Why? For this excellent reason — the idea that God foresees the future, is but a consequence from our idea of God. Now, the idea which men form of God must evidently be a most incomplete one; for it is impossible that human reason should, in

its weakness, comprehend God, who is infinite. Should we place an idea, which is but a consequence of a most imperfect conception of a Being who is infinite, in comparison with a fact falling under our immediate observation? This would not surely be the part of good sense. If, then, we do perceive an absolute contradiction between the divine foreknowledge and human liberty, and feel ourselves obliged to give up one or the other, it must be our belief in the divine foreknowledge. For we are more sure that we are free beings, than we can be that God foresees the future. No such contradiction, however, really exists; it is but an illusion, as I hope I shall be able to prove.

To begin, then, with a very simple remark: if we conceive that foreknowledge in the divine Being acts as it does in us, we run the risk of forming a most incorrect notion of it, and, consequently, of seeing a contradiction between it and liberty, that would disappear altogether had we a truer notion. Let us consider that we have not the same faculty for foreseeing the future as we have of reviewing the past; and even in cases where we do anticipate it, it is by an induction from the past. This induction may amount either to certainty, or merely to probability. It will amount to certainty when we are perfectly acquainted with necessary causes, and their law of operation. The effects of such causes in given circumstances having been determined by experience, we can predict the return of similar effects under similar circumstances with entire certainty, so long at least as the present laws of nature remain in force. It is in this way that we foresee, in most cases, the physical occurrences, whose

law of operation is known to us ; and such foresight would extend much further, were it not for unexpected circumstances which come in to modify the result. This induction can never go beyond probability, however, when we consider the acts of free causes ; and for the very reason that they are free, and that the effects which arise from such causes are not of necessary occurrence, and do not invariably follow the same antecedent circumstances. Where the question is, then, as to the acts of any free cause, we are never able to foresee it with certainty, and induction is limited to conjectures of probability.

Such is the operation, and such are the limits of human foresight. Our minds foresee the future by induction from the past ; this foresight can never attain certainty except in the case of causes and effects connected by necessary dependence ; when the effects of free causes are to be anticipated, as all such effects are contingent, our foresight must be merely conjecture.

If, now, we attempt to attribute to the Deity the same mode of foresight of which human beings are capable, it will follow, as a strict consequence, that, as God must know exactly and completely the laws to which all the necessary causes in nature are subject — laws which change only according to his will, — he can foresee with absolute certainty all events which will take place in the future. The certain foresight of effects, therefore, which is to us possible only in particular cases, and which, even then, is always liable to the limitation that the actual laws of nature are not modified, — this foresight, which, even when most sure,



is limited and contingent, must be complete and absolute certainty in God, supposing his foreknowledge to be of like kind with ours.

But it is evident that, according to this hypothesis, the Deity cannot foresee with certainty the volitions of free causes any more than we can ; for, as his foresight is founded, as ours is, upon the knowledge of the laws which govern causes, and as the law of free causes is precisely this, that their volitions are not necessary, God cannot calculate, any more than a human being can, the influence of motives, which, in any given case, may act upon such causes. Even his intelligence can lead no further than to conjectures, more probable, indeed, than ours, but never amounting to certainty. According to this hypothesis, we must, therefore, say either that God can foresee, certainly, the future volitions of men, and that man, therefore, is not a free being, or that man is free, and that God, therefore, cannot, any more than we can, foresee his volitions with certainty ; and thus divine prescience and human free-will are brought into direct contradiction.

But, gentlemen, why must there be this contradiction ? Merely because we suppose that God foresees the future in the same way in which we foresee it ; that his foreknowledge operates like our own. Now, is this, I ask, such an idea as we ought to form of divine prescience, or such an idea as even the partisans of this system, which I am opposing, form ? Have we any reason for thus imposing upon the Deity the limitation of our own feebleness ? I think not.

Unendowed, as we are, with any faculty of foreseeing the future, it may be difficult for us to conceive of

such a faculty in God. But yet can we not from analogy form such an idea? We have now two faculties of perception — of the past by memory, of the present by observation; can we not imagine a third to exist in God — the faculty of perceiving the future, as we perceive the past? What would be the consequence? This: that God, instead of conjecturing, by induction, the acts of human beings from the laws of the causes operating upon them, would see them simply as the results of the free determinations of the will. Such perception of future acts no more implies the necessity of those actions, than the perception of similar acts in the past. To see that effects arise from certain causes is not to force causes to produce them; neither is it to compel these effects to follow. It matters not whether such a perception refers to the past, present, or future; it is merely a perception; and, therefore, far from producing the effect perceived, it even presupposes this effect already produced.

I do not pretend that this vision of what is to be is an operation of which our minds easily conceive. It is difficult to form an image of what we have never experienced; but I do assert, that the power of seeing what no longer exists is full as remarkable as that of seeing what has as yet no being, and that the reason of our readily conceiving of the former is only the fact that we are endowed with such a power: to my reason, the mystery is the same.

But whatever may or may not be in reality the mode of divine foreknowledge, or however exact may be the image which we attempt to form of it, it always, I say, — and this is the only point I am desirous of

proving, — it always remains a matter of uncertainty, which cannot be removed, whether the divine foreknowledge is of a kind like our own, or not; and as, in the one case, there would not be the same contradiction that there is in the other, between our belief in divine foreknowledge and human freedom, it is proved true, I think, that no one has a right to assert the existence of such a contradiction, and the necessity that human reason should choose between them.

To what conclusion, then, does philosophy come in this grand controversy as to human freedom and divine foreknowledge? To this, gentlemen, that there are two things in which we believe — one, on the unquestionable authority of observation; the other, on the far weaker authority of our reasonings, without our being able clearly to explain how they coexist. And here we ought, by common consent, to leave the subject; for philosophy should know how to respect its true limits, under penalty of losing all claim to the respect and confidence of men.

I have now done with the system of necessity, and pass on to the consideration of mysticism.

Every philosophical system has its foundation and ground-work in human nature; the only thing difficult is, to have such a knowledge of human nature as will enable us to discover the root and source of each system. With this knowledge, we can understand, thoroughly, each opinion; and the principle once grasped, we easily gain a clear understanding of its consequences. Vague and obscure as is the system of mysticism, I will yet endeavor to point out the facts in human nature from which it originates, and

which it attempts to express; I will invite your close attention, for the trains of thought to be followed are very subtle.

Mysticism rests on two facts, already described in the sketch that I have given of human nature. Let me recall them to your minds. In the first place, then, I showed how great the difference is between the absolute destiny of man, as it would result from his nature, and the actual destiny which an individual, placed under the most favorable circumstances, attains in this life. In other words, I showed you, that, with all our efforts, we cannot attain to more than a very small part of the good which our nature craves, or accomplish, except in an imperfect degree, our destiny. In the second place, I showed you, that we cannot, in this life, secure even that measure of good which is actually within our reach, except on the condition of substituting for the natural action of our faculties another mode of action, whose characteristic is concentration, and whose consequence is fatigue.

From these two facts it results, on the one hand, that human life can, at the best, afford but very imperfect good; and, on the other, that no human being can acquire even this good, without an effort which is not natural, and which is followed by a fatigue that can be relieved only by allowing the bent spring to be relaxed, and our faculties to return to their natural and primitive mode of action.

From these two facts springs mysticism. If the only means of obtaining any good in this life is an effort which is against nature,—and if, even then, a man, the most favored by circumstances, only secures the

shadow of good, — is it not plain that the pursuit and acquisition of good is not the end of the present life, and that to hope or search for it implies an equal delusion? What? can a thing not to be found in life really be the end of life, — a thing, whose shadow even we cannot reach, without doing violence to our nature, and submitting all our faculties to an insupportable constraint? Man has truly an end and destiny to attain; but to seek it here is folly, for our lot in life is disappointment. To resign ourselves to our weakness, — to renounce all effort and action, — to await death, that it may break our fetters, and place us in an order of things where the accomplishment of our end will be possible, — this is our only reasonable course, our only true vocation.

It may be proved that this is the true origin of the system of mysticism, by the fact that the historical eras, when it has been most fully developed, have been precisely those in which human efforts were most discouraged, by profound experience of their fruitlessness.

Ages of tyranny, of skepticism, and of moral degradation, have been those in which mysticism has been professed most earnestly, and actually appeared in practice on the largest scale. The greatest development of mysticism was in the age which immediately succeeded the introduction of Christianity; and you well know what the state of the world then was. A skepticism, the most universal in philosophy, coöperated with an utter corruption of morals, and a most degrading tyranny, during this decline of the Roman empire. Truth, virtue, liberty, seemed only words;

every thing united to prove to man the futility of effort, and thus to discourage it. Why, if truth could not be discovered, should he seek it? Why, if there were no moral distinctions, should he prefer one course of conduct to another? Why, indeed, should he act at all, if ages of heroism and victory had but served to introduce an era of society wholly wretched and inglorious, under the sway of weak and bloody tyrants? Such was the lesson to man which this era seemed to utter. On the other hand, a flood of barbarism roared round the gates of the empire; and this threatening sign of fatal and inevitable ruin declared the vanity of earthly things, the emptiness of human power, yet louder, perhaps, than the voice of the past and the aspect of the present. Add yet further, that the exalted spirituality of the Christian faith gave a new impulse to those minds, already filled with contempt for earth, by its visions of heaven, and you will readily see that, if I have truly pointed out the principle of mysticism, never were circumstances more favorable for its growth.

Hence that wonderful passion for seclusion which peopled the deserts, which led to the solitudes of the Thebais one half the population of Egypt, and, developing all the elements of mysticism contained in Christianity, perverted the true spirit of this religion, and merged it in effeminate asceticism. This ascetic spirit did not, indeed, triumph, but it sowed in the bosom of the Christian church the fruitful seeds of monkish principles — seeds so long-lived and prolific, that fifteen centuries have not sufficed to exhaust them,

and which were developed with redoubled energy in the disastrous era of the middle ages.

You can conceive how the mystics were led to form the views of life which I have described. Grounds for such misconceptions exist in the facts of our nature, and in the circumstances of our present lot. But they did not rest here. For, with such conceptions of the present life, they had to explain how our lot became what it is; the mystery was to be penetrated in which a being is involved who thus sees his end and destiny, is endowed with faculties necessary for its attainment, and yet sees himself placed in the midst of external circumstances which present insurmountable obstacles. This state of being is intelligible to those who see in the present life a necessary scene of probation for the creation and education of a moral nature, whose trials, therefore, are to be courageously met, and actively surmounted; but, for those who see only evil in our lot, without perceiving its use and object, it is but an extraordinary phenomenon, whose cause must be sought in some anterior scene of existence. Thus the doctrine of mysticism brings with it inevitably either the doctrine of Manicheism, or that of the fall of man. Only one or the other view can explain the evils of life, if we have not embraced the idea that the purpose and effect of these is to produce a moral greatness in man which can exist on no other condition. Thus we see both doctrines strangely allying themselves with mysticism, in the faith of the hermits of the Thebais. The world,

in their view, is a place of punishment, where man is placed to expiate the sins committed by his progenitors, whom God had destined at first for a life of perfect felicity. To bear with resignation this chastisement during life, and wait for the hour of deliverance, they thought man's highest duty. But the principle of evil, the devil who tempted Eve in Paradise, was yet laboring to turn him away from this course of patient submission, and to seduce him into the follies of worldly activity, by the promise of all the goods which life presents, and thus was constantly deceiving and tempting our nature. Hence the trials by which the sainted anchorites were beset in the desert, and the state of perpetual warfare in which the legends represent them as living. These two dogmas, so closely associated with the fundamental principle of mysticism, have maintained their hold with it in the midst of Christendom. By a strange contradiction, they remain side by side with the doctrine of probation, although directly opposed to this great view of Christian truth, which has exerted upon humanity so powerful and useful an influence, and has produced so happy and grand a revolution in the whole science of ethics.

Such, gentlemen, are the three leading principles of mysticism. Let us look now to its effects on conduct. The principle once established, these consequences flow naturally and spontaneously from it, and no sect of mystics has escaped their influence. I will take, as an illustration, the grand school of anchorites, who introduced the monastic life into the practices of the church. You will thus compre-



hend the peculiar characteristic of that singular mode of existence, which presents one of the most remarkable phenomena of Christian civilization, and which we meet with in a greater or less degree of development wherever mysticism has prevailed.

I have explained at length, in the courses of the preceding years, two classes of obstacles which here impede human nature in its attempts to accomplish its true destiny. This world, far from being a place where all its constituent vital forces work together harmoniously, is, in fact, the battle-ground of their contention. Each force, in its process of development, finds itself limited and restrained by other forces, and, in turn, restrains them. All development here is incomplete, and, even in this imperfect degree, it is the result of the contest forever waging. Such is the real condition, in this world, of every power, whether free or necessary; such is the condition of human power, one of the weakest of all; and hence its limited influence. The very organization of this world which surrounds us, the very world itself, in other words, is a source of the evil of the present state, and renders fruitless all efforts to attain our real end.

But what is it that makes us thus subject to the outward world? What is it that causes these various forces to conflict with our will, to restrain and check it? It is the body. Nothing external could exercise any influence over us but through the body. As our body is at once material, and, at the same time, the necessary instrument by which our faculties act, the external world has power over us by influencing the

organs which we are obliged to use. The body is doubly an evil, then, by weakening our faculties through the external conditions it imposes, and by giving all other forces in nature control over the development of those faculties. Thus, then, the first source of our want of power is the influence of the external world; and the second is our bodily organization, by which we are subjected to this influence. The world and the body are the two great principles of evil here below; these are the two grand obstacles which oppose, in this life, our progress toward that final good for which we are fitted, and which our nature craves.

Admit this, and what follows? We must expect to find, in the creed of mystics, an irreconcilable hostility to the world and the flesh. And this is, in fact, the very most prominent and striking characteristic of the mystical doctrine and course of life.

The anchorites, who, in the era which we are considering, peculiarly represented the system of mysticism, used every possible means to destroy the influence of the body; they declared against it a perpetual and merciless warfare; not only would they not gratify its lawful desires, but they macerated it, scourged it, and sought to weaken and prostrate it by every means in their power; they went further, and yet more to testify the contempt in which they held it, and to show external symbols of their hatred, they clothed themselves in garments which concealed its proportions, as if it were not worthy to appear in the sight of man, or to occupy his attention for an instant. And, in acting thus, the anchorites not

only endeavored to manifest their hostility to the flesh, they sought also to weaken the hold of the world upon the soul, by annihilating, as far as they were able, the medium through which its influence was felt. They believed that the spirit would become freer, and more independent of the fetters which bound it to earth, in proportion as the body was weakened; while, at the same time, as the carnal appetites were eradicated, one avenue was closed through which the most attractive temptations of the external world gained entrance to the soul. In a word, they endeavored, with all their strength, to burst the ties which, by uniting the soul to the body, produced the evils of the present life; and the more they succeeded, the more did they feel this separation taking place, and that emancipation of the soul for which they sighed commencing, although it could be completed only in the hour of death.

This hostility to the body they extended to the world, as the true source of the evil of which the flesh was but the instrument. They therefore separated themselves from it, now by placing between them and it the impassable barrier of the desert, now by immuring themselves in walls from which there was no escape, thus artificially producing that isolation which they had not the means of seeking in distant solitudes. In the desert even, far from living together, they fled each other's presence; and the greatest saints avoided all neighborhood of man, and retreated further and further into the wilderness, as they saw neophytes appear in the vicinity of their retreats.

Within the monastery, it was the same. Narrow cells separated each from his fellow, and prevented all possible approach or contact with human beings. The monk despised every interest, pursuit, and affection, belonging to that world which he avoided thus anxiously. Glory, ambition, love, the purest and most natural emotions, all the occupations of life, all ties which bind man to his race, all forms, and laws, and movements of society, were by him detested and proscribed; proscribed as empty and delusive; detested as snares for the credulity of imagination, and for the blindness of instinct. But solitude was not enough; he sought to increase its horrors in proportion as he pushed to the extreme the mystical doctrine of hatred to the outward world, and feared leaving himself open to a single temptation from desire, affection, or activity; he dreaded lest he might be seduced away from hostility to the present life; from this painful effort of breaking every tie which bound him to earth, and from that contemplative longing for a better world which seemed to him the only true state of being here below.

Another consequence of the principles of mysticism, not less direct than hatred of the flesh and of the world, was contempt for action—for action in every shape and mode. And the lives of the mystics were as true to their principle in this particular as in the others which I have described.

We are impelled to action, gentlemen, as you know, by the instinctive tendencies of our nature demanding gratification. Each tendency has its peculiar end, and these different ends determine the different objects

to which human activity is directed. Different modes of action are to be distinguished, then, in our nature. Knowledge is one object of pursuit; hence the first mode of our activity — *intellectual activity*. The exertion of our energy on the external world is another object; hence *physical activity*. Union with beings who have life, especially with those of our own race, is an end also; hence arises a third mode, which we call *sympathetic activity*. Thus the seeking of knowledge, the exercise of our energies on the external world, and loving, are forms of human activity, as our nature aspires to the end for which it was made, and which it is impelled to pursue in these three directions. Life is passed in this threefold pursuit and effort, in the search for these three kinds of good; and such is the force of the instincts impelling us, such the natural energy of the faculties with which we are endowed for their gratification, that, however much men strive to subdue them or restrain their action, they cannot wholly succeed.

And yet this was the wish of the mystics; for, according to their convictions, it was not the will of God that these instincts should be satisfied in this life; and any attempt on the part of man to realize their satisfaction was, therefore, worse than error and folly; it was rebellion to the commands of the Deity, a concession made to the everlasting adversary of the human race. Complete passivity — that is to say, an absolutely impossible state — was the ideal of perfection to which they aspired with all their power. With such an end proposed for their pursuit, really more unattainable than the perfect happiness which they

rejected, it is curious to observe the practical modes by which the mystics sought its accomplishment. Let us begin with intellectual activity.

We arrive at knowledge, in our present state, as you well know, by attention; and attention is the concentration of intellect, that is to say, an intellectual effort. Despising the end, the mystic of course despised the means; and looking upon science as a dangerous deceit, he was bound to take all means to repress both the natural curiosity, which makes us desire it, and the intellectual efforts through which we seek it. But how destroy this faculty of intelligence? It cannot be destroyed. Of all modes of human activity, that of intellect is the most difficult to repress. It acts even when we wish most to check it; for it must act before we can form such a wish. Fortunately, there are two modes of the development of the intelligent faculty. At one time passive, with senses open to impressions from the world, floating on the tide of surrounding influences, giving itself up to passing images, it receives a knowledge which is vague, confused, and uncertain; at another, becoming active, and uniting all its forces, applying them, as it wills, to different objects, it examines, analyzes, distinguishes, acquiring precise information and clear, consecutive ideas. In the second stage only is there effort. In the contemplative state there is none. Intellect is, then, idly following its natural bent; active indeed, because activity is its essence, but still as little active as it possibly can be, because no act of the will sustains, directs, or concentrates its energies. It depends upon ourselves to suppress this act

of will or not, and, consequently, to confine to the contemplative mode, to which we ourselves contribute nothing, all action of the intellect. This the mystics attempted and succeeded in. All, especially the anchorites, forbade all intellectual effort, and recommended a life of contemplation as the only lawful sphere of mental activity. In other words, a contemplative life, and contempt for all scientific research, have been the two characteristic traits of every mystical sect, without exception.

Now, to what does contemplation lead? Abandon yourself for a length of time to this passive state of the intellect; give yourself up to all ideas and images which come confusedly and pass away, and soon you will feel your mind become clouded and perplexed, amid this ever-fluctuating series of impressions; a stupefaction and delirium, in which truth and error, illusion and reality, can no longer be distinguished, will come over you; and let this state be prolonged, especially in the night season, when nothing occurs to interrupt it, no motion, sound, or external event, and soon you will be unable to tell whether you wake or sleep, and will become a prey to the phantoms and chimeras which throng our dreams. From the state of contemplation to revery, hallucination, and delirium, is but a step; this step all sects of mystics boldly took. And do not suppose that they disavowed these consequences. It was a principal doctrine of mysticism, that the human mind could, through contemplation, arrive at views of truth and of actual being, which it was quite incapable of, in its ordinary condition, and could thus hold communications with

the future, with unseen spirits, with God himself. Theurgy is the daughter of mysticism; and, far from avoiding these hallucinations and ecstatic states, mysticism sought them as elevated stages of that contemplative life which all should strive to attain, and as signal marks of the favor of Heaven extended to the saints. Whence, now, this predilection of mysticism for contemplation? The mystic loved it, because, in this state, the mind was as passive as it could in its nature be, and more and more passive the nearer contemplation approached the ecstasy which was its consummation. On the same ground, and for the same reason, the mystics asserted that their intellects were more clear-sighted when they slept than when they were awake, infinitely nearer to truth and to God; and hence the respect they paid to dreams, and the care with which they endeavored to interpret them; whence you see that mysticism ended, necessarily, in substituting the visions of reveries for science, as the result of intellectual action, as it had first substituted contemplation for attention, in its mode of operation.

Another trait of the mystics, immediately connected with those I have already described, was their contempt for precise language; and this consequence of their principles, if not so immediate and direct, is still a necessary one; for a precise mode of expression implies precise ideas, and these presuppose intellectual effort; while, on the other hand, in the state of contemplation, all ideas are suggested under the form of images, and images are confused; their knowledge, then, was rather a sentiment than a clear



view, and sentiment forbids definite statement. Precision of language was, therefore, repugnant to the mystics; hence the obscurity of style, and the fondness for symbolic expression, which is peculiarly their characteristic. This trait, trifling as it may appear to be, deserved, nevertheless, this passing notice.

Intellectual activity cannot be wholly subdued. The mystics were forced, therefore, to treat with it, and, since they could not wholly expel it, to diminish, as they could, its power. Not so, however, with physical activity. Depending wholly, as this does, on the will, it is only necessary to will its suppression to effect it. Here, then, the system could be put fully in practice; and the mystics did not fail to do so. Physical inaction has been always considered, recommended, and practised by them, as one trait of the ideal life. To escape from the sphere of physical activity, it was necessary only to withdraw to deserts and monasteries, and thus set themselves apart from all the motives to action which prompt men in society. Even in these retreats, it was not without repugnance and regret that they performed even the indispensable acts of life, and usually intrusted the discharge of them to neophytes, who had not reached the state of perfection. The most saintly anchorites jealously sought this glory of pushing to extreme the habit of physical inactivity; and in the lives of the most famous may be found instances of excesses of this nature which can only be equalled by the Fakirs — the mystical sect of India. Together with this inaction, the annals of the desert and the monastery show us their habit of performing the most painful toils, arbitrarily imposed or volun-

tarily undertaken; and they were dictated by the same spirit of desire to weaken the strength of the body and show the vanity of human effort. For this end, the anchorites of the Thebais imposed upon themselves, and upon those who came to unite with them, the duty of traversing vast distances, beneath the burning sun, to draw water from the Nile. And for what object, think you? To water a stick planted in the sand, which could not grow. What keener satire on human activity, I ask you,—what more striking symbol of the fruitlessness of effort could be given, than this painful toil for an object so frivolous? Thus, even in their activity, did these hermits seek to manifest that contempt for action, which was a necessary consequence of the system of mysticism, and which the lives of its votaries manifested in a variety of forms.

Need I show you how contempt for the sympathies and affections, the other grand spring of human action, equally appeared in their conduct? Is it not plain, that, to withdraw from the world, and live alone in the desert or the solitude of a cell, was to burst at once all social ties, and voluntarily to renounce them forever? There, as you know, were none to love; no parent, spouse, nor child; no brother, no friend; and there these affections, thus rendered powerless, were to be utterly extirpated from the heart. This was a condition of mystical perfection; and they were the greatest saints, who had best succeeded in extinguishing every sympathetic affection in their nature. Is it not plain, too, that this mutilation of their spiritual being was a necessary

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consequence of their opinion as to the present life, and the proper course of human conduct?

And now, gentlemen, sum up what remains of human nature, thus perfected and sanctified by the mystical creed, and you will see that it is all absorbed and condensed into one single state of mind—contemplation; and, if I might use the expression, I should say that all issues and outlets of active powers, desires, and faculties in the mind were wholly closed, save this single one of contemplation. And this is left open, only because it is beyond human power to close it.

In fact, mysticism, availing itself of the power which God has given us over our faculties by the exercise of will, used this power to condemn them to inaction, that is to say, to suppress all our activity. One faculty only, in one mode of its action, resisted the attempt—the intellect; and mysticism, going to the utmost limit of its power, suppressed the one mode of its action which it could reach, and tolerated the other only because it could not accomplish an impossibility in its destruction. Thus was all human activity reduced to one mode of intellectual action, namely, contemplation. But still our faculties are the necessary instruments for the satisfaction of our natural instincts. If, then, you reduce these instruments to a state of inaction, all satisfaction of our impulses becomes impossible. But, if one of these instruments is left in action, this, and this one alone, must labor for their gratification. By thus absorbing the whole of human activity in contemplation, mysticism forced our whole nature—the mind, the affections,

even the body—to seek in contemplation the gratification of their desires. All activity, I might say all human vitality, finding this only outlet, and seeking vent in this single act, raised it at once to its highest stage of ecstasy and trance; and as, on the other hand, all the desires of human nature sought in it their satisfaction, the state of ecstasy was believed to include all kinds of good to which human nature involuntarily aspires. Ecstasy, to the eye of the mystic, was true science, moral perfection, union with God; science, virtue, knowledge, all were combined in ecstasy. It satisfied the intellect, by bringing it into communication with the world of truth which was only revealed in the state of trance. It satisfied the activity of our nature, by exhibiting to it the state of perfection to which it aspired. It satisfied the affections, by the communion it offered with God, the Being most amiable and lovely of all beings,—a communion to be yet closer in another life. Thus the state of ecstasy satisfied all wants, and mysticism, though appearing to destroy, really destroyed no power; our activity, the tendencies of our nature, though turned from their natural pursuits, were not eradicated, but, concentrated in contemplation, they put forth all their energy there, and there found the satisfaction they craved.

The most perfect symbol of mysticism was the anchorite who conceived the idea of living upon the top of a column, and who passed long years there in total inactivity. Maceration of the body, isolation from the world, absolute passivity, entire

absorption of all the faculties and all the energies of the soul in a trance of twenty years,—here was mysticism imbodyed; and, as if to render the symbol complete, this column was reared upon the very borders of the East,—that land which, from all ages, has been the home of mysticism.

I feel sure, gentlemen, if you have understood what has now been said, that you will find nothing strange in the lives of the mystics, to which you have now the key and the ready explanation. I hasten to consider such consequences of this system as are more peculiarly moral.

What is the strict consequence of this principle, that man cannot accomplish his destiny on earth, and that his highest duty is to be resigned to his condition, and to wait patiently for the hour when God will deliver him? It follows, necessarily, that man is to submit, and not to act; and, as all actions are equally fruitless, that there is no moral distinction between them. As a matter of fact, this is the consequence to which the mystics, who carried out their opinions fully, did actually come. Plotinus professed boldly this consequence of mystical doctrines. He affirmed that there was no difference between actions,—that there could be no good nor evil,—and why? Because man has no end to pursue on earth, and therefore no motive to determine him. What, according to him, should man be? A wholly passive creature, resigned and submissive, surrendering himself to a course of events not controlled by himself, but emanating from God. Thus you see, that,

by the confession of mystics themselves, their system led directly to a denial that man could have any duties in the present life.

If any further proof is needed of the truth of this assertion, it may be found in the conduct of another class of mystics, which, for the honor of humanity be it said, was infinitely smaller than the austere class. Setting out from the principle that there is no moral difference between actions, these men were led, not to inactivity, but to licentiousness, and scrupled not to gratify every passion, whether bodily or mental, and abandon themselves without restraint to the grossest indulgence. Of what importance, in truth, is the conduct we pursue here on earth, if we have been placed here only to exist for a time, while awaiting a higher life? Why, with such convictions, should we desire a man to resist the invitations of pleasure, and prefer a virtue of which he has no conception, when he feels himself under no obligation, present or future, to do one thing rather than another? Obligation is destroyed utterly by the principle of mysticism; and it is therefore one of the most remarkable of the systems of belief through which the human mind has been brought to a misconception of the law of obligation.

It remains for me to show, in a few words, that, if such are the legitimate consequences of mysticism, the principle itself is false, and consequently inadmissible.

It is true, then,—and once again observe, that every system has some truth for its foundation,—it is perfectly true, that man cannot attain the highest

good, and the complete destiny which his nature promises; and that the degree of good which is accessible must be gained by effort, that is to say, by painful, self-imposed restraint. This is true. But the consequence which the mystics deduce from this is false. Let us suppose that man, as he came from the hands of his Maker, had been placed in circumstances entirely different from those of the present life, which presented no obstacle to the full satisfaction of his nature, and the complete development of his faculties, — in circumstances, that is to say, which would have allowed of his becoming immediately and completely happy, without any exertion on his own part, — what would have been the consequence? Man would have always remained a *thing*, and would never have become what now it is his chief glory to be, — for it renders him like to Deity, — a *person*. His condition would be as follows: by the mere fact of existence, his natural tendencies would be developed, and, impelled by them, his faculties would begin to act, and, without effort, would secure for the passions the good they craved. His nature would be happy, I will grant; it would never know the pain which it now experiences from the privation of good, nor the fatigue which now is the condition of existence; but man would have no part in determining his own destiny. Never would he know its true glory, never deserve its fulfilment. It is this very difficulty which we meet with, in attempting to accomplish our destiny, that awakens us, — makes us comprehend our real end, discover the means of attaining it, take command of ourselves, govern our

faculties, and restrain our passions, that we may succeed in the attempt,—it is this very difficulty, in a word, which calls out the *personality* of our being; for all these acts are acts of our personality—the elements which constitute us persons. And it is in becoming a person that we become a *cause*—a cause properly so called—a free cause, intelligent, having an end and plan, foreseeing, deliberating, resolving, capable of merit or demerit, and responsible for acts,—in a word, something like to God—a moral and rational agent—a man. If any one prefers, to such a destiny as this which the present life affords, the state of a watch, endowed with sensation, and enjoying the pleasure of feeling within it the operation of unimpeded movements, in which it has no agency itself, I will not dispute the point with him. But, for myself, I cannot hesitate; I prefer infinitely the first, and thank God that he has allotted it to me. From this view of life, it would appear that our present condition is not one of punishment, in which we are placed to expiate some unknown sin committed by our sires, but a place of probation, into which we were brought that we might become like God—moral persons—intelligent, rational, and free. If we could conceive of a condition different from our present one, exempt from its miseries, in which, nevertheless, this moral creation could take place, then might we doubt this explanation of our present lot, and accuse God of severity. But, as it is impossible to conceive how this admirable creation of personality could take place, except under such conditions, the explanation



holds good, and God's ways are justified. If this is so, gentlemen, then are there duties in our present state of being; life is not intended for rest and inaction, but for the creation of personality, by the exercise of intellect and energy, that is, by virtue. The system of mysticism is, then, completely erroneous and false, although it had its origin in two actual facts of human nature.

## LECTURE VI.

## SYSTEM OF PANTHEISM.

GENTLEMEN,

I HAVE exhibited to you two of the systems, whose principles imply the impossibility of a law of human obligation—the systems of necessity and of mysticism; and have told you that there were two other systems which tend to the same conclusion, namely, pantheism and skepticism.

In the present lecture, I wish to direct your attention to the first of these—the system of pantheism. It has appeared under different forms, both in ancient and modern times, and in every era has received various modifications from the different philosophers who have advocated it. It would not be difficult to distinguish, under all these different forms, the essential principles of pantheism; and this, perhaps, would be the proper course; but I cannot resist the temptation of giving you an idea of the form under which the genius of Spinoza has presented it. And I will attempt, therefore, by an exposition of the system of Spinoza, to introduce you to a knowledge of the general principles of pantheism. Two reasons

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determine me to take this course: first, Spinoza's doctrines, which all speak of, though few have taken the pains to study and comprehend them, are exceedingly obscure; and, secondly, no one among the philosophers who have professed pantheism, has developed its principles with such an exact method, and in so original and perfect a shape.

One work only of Spinoza's was published during his life-time, which bore the title *Tractatus theologico-politicus*. This was not so much an exposition of his system, as it was a half-philosophical, half-historical treatise, based on its principles. But after his death, under the title of "Posthumous Works of Spinoza," several of his writings were published; and in these it is that we find his doctrines fully set forth. His system is particularly unfolded in the *Ethica, Ordine Geometrico demonstrata, et in Quinque Partes distincta*. This work comprises, in five books, the most rigorous and complete, and, at the same time, the most obscure exposition of pantheism ever given. In the First Book, *De Deo*, Spinoza has defined the idea which we should form of God. In the Second, *De Natura et Origine Mentis*, he has deduced, from the idea of God, the idea which we should hold of man. In the Third, *De Natura et Origine Affectuum*, the philosopher has explained the mechanism of the passions, which, in his view, embraces the operation of all phenomena in human nature. In the Fourth, *De Servitute Humana, seu de Affectuum Viribus*, taking for his point of departure the laws of human nature, which he had

before described, he shows the necessary order of its development, and the degree in which necessity influences the will of man. And, finally, in the Fifth Book, *De Potentia Intellectus, seu de Libertate Humana*, Spinoza has endeavored to show the nature and operation of free-will. This portion of the work is extremely weak, and goes further, if I mistake not, than the principles of his system, admitted in their strictness, will allow. Such is the plan of the work. First, God; next, man; then, the laws of his nature;—these established, the influence of necessity first, and, next, the operation of free-will, in this nature;—such is the plan of the *Ethica*. On this foundation he has reared a system of politics and ethics, in a second work, also published, which is, unfortunately, but a fragment. It is entitled *Tractatus Politicus, in quo demonstratur quomodo Societas, ubi Imperium Monarchicum Locum habet, sicut et ea ubi Optimi imperant, debet institui ne in Tyrannidem labatur, et ut Pax, Libertasque Civium inviolata maneat*. In these two works, especially in the first, are we to look for the system of Spinoza.

Spinoza's method is as follows:—He begins, as geometers do, with the explanation of certain definitions and axioms; he then proceeds to announce, successively, different propositions, which he demonstrates, and thence passes in course to the scholia and corollaries; as he advances, each new demonstration implies the preceding one, and refers to it; so that, unless the propositions already proved, and the demonstration of them, are distinctly kept in mind,

it is impossible to comprehend what follows. This is the cause of the difficulty in understanding the work. And it would be somewhat presumptuous, even after the most attentive study, to assert that we understand Spinoza thoroughly. In this case, as in all cases where the attempt is made to apply mathematical forms of reasoning to subjects for which they are unsuitable, the geometrical method serves only to render the exposition complicated and obscure. In the summary sketch of the system which I am about to give, I can touch upon only the principal points of the system; it would require a course of many months to give you a thorough and detailed description of it. In thus limiting myself, I cannot promise that what I say will be perfectly clear and exact. Such a promise would imply that there was nothing contradictory in the system itself, which is not my opinion; and it would suppose, also, that I have a perfectly distinct idea of it myself, which is not the case; for I am obliged to confess that, after the most attentive study that I have been able to give it, there are several portions of the system which still leave me in doubt, and to which I must give a yet longer examination. But it will be sufficient, for the object we have in view, that you should seize the chief outlines of the system; and I shall have done something towards enabling you to comprehend its grand and obscure doctrines, if I awaken in you the desire to become acquainted with it, and put you in the right way to approach the study of it.

Spinoza distinguishes three classes of existences. The first class are those which appear to us to have

a real existence, while yet they can subsist only through and in some other being. The qualities of body, and whatever we call *attributes, properties, phenomena, effects*, compose this first class; they are never seen isolated, and possessed of independent existence, but always associated and united with something else, through which they have their being, and separated from which we cannot conceive of them as having any being at all. It is not thus with the second class. These do appear to have an existence of their own, and seem independent of other beings; they are actual being, as Spinoza says; they are, for example, all bodies which we see around us—man himself. But, when we reflect upon it, we find that all such things have once begun to exist, and that they cease to exist; in a word, we discover that it is not by themselves and of themselves that they hold and continue their existence. Man, for example, feels that he did not originate his own being; that he does not preserve it; that he has not the power of continuing it; and that, therefore, existence is not essential, but accidental in him. Although, therefore, such things do appear to exist independently, yet it is but an appearance; and we find that, in truth, the existence which is in them is not of them.

Existences of these two classes are all which fall within the sphere of our observation. But reason goes beyond them, and, reflecting that the existence of all such beings as we gain a knowledge of through observation is a derived one; that it is accidental and transient in them; that none of them possess

it as their essence;—concludes that somewhere there must be a self-existent being. Hence the idea of a third class, the peculiar characteristic of which is self-existence.

It is this third class which Spinoza first considers; and he proves at once that there cannot be more than one such being. For, says he, beings are distinguished by their attributes. Now, what do these attributes manifest? The essential nature of the being. If, then, two beings had the same essence, they would have the same attributes, of necessity; they could not then be distinct from one another; they would not be two, but one. We cannot suppose, therefore, that there are two beings whose essence is self-existence. The being whose essence is existence, then, is *one*; and, as we can only properly call that a *substance* which is self-existent, there is but one *substance*, which is *God*.

The unity of substance being thus proved, Spinoza demonstrates successively that it is *necessary* and *infinite*. It is necessary, because, to conceive of that which is self-existent as not being, is to annihilate it; and it is infinite, because, as it is possessed of all being, nothing can exist beyond itself. To be finite, it must be limited by some other being; and, as it contains all existence, nothing which does exist can be exterior to it, or limit it.

Unity, necessity, and infinity of substance, being thus demonstrated, Spinoza proves yet further that being is *eternal*, since it is necessary and infinite; *independent*, since it is one and infinite; and, finally, that it is *simple* and *indivisible*. For, if it was

composed of parts, he says, these parts would be of the same nature, or of a different one. If they were of the same nature, then there would be several beings essentially self-existent, which has been proved impossible; and, if its parts were of a different nature, taken together they would not be equal to the whole, and would not produce it. Spinoza enters fully into a discussion of these essential properties of the one substance, and demonstrates them successively. Obligated as I am to limit myself, I cannot follow him in the developments of his reasoning.

God being thus self-existent, his essence being existence, and the *one* substance being endowed with all the properties which I have mentioned, Spinoza next proceeds to inquire whether the being, thus proved to have extension, has also thought; and he shows that it is impossible to attribute to him exclusively either extension or thought. For, he argues, if the self-existent being was in his essence exclusively thought, then it would follow that there could be no extension; and, on the other hand, if his essence was exclusively extension, it would then follow that there could be no thought. Consequently, thought and extension must be considered as attributes of the same being. Since this being is infinite, all his attributes must be so too; and thought and extension, therefore, are the infinite attributes of this being.

Spinoza admits, that it is not according to the common idea to attribute thought and extension to the same being; but he does not respect this prejudice. What can be more different, he says, than a round form and a square one? And yet both are modes



of the same thing, namely, extension. The idea of substance implies only one property, that of existence; and existence is as necessarily implied by extension and by thought, as extension is by a round form or a square one.

We have an idea of these two attributes of being, because our observation embraces extended substances and thinking substances. But these cannot be the only two attributes of the self-existent being, for as he is infinite he must have an infinity of attributes. It is, then, a characteristic of the self-existent being, that he has an infinity of attributes, which are infinite, each in its own sense, and which all manifest, in a peculiar way, the essence of this being, which is existence. Thus a being who is one, simple, eternal, infinite, with an infinity of attributes, which all express in some particular manner, the essential character of this being, — existence, and among these attributes, extension and thought, the only two of which we have any knowledge; — such a being, according to Spinoza, is God, in the only idea we can form of him; and this idea is the fundamental one of his system.

God being the only substance, and comprehending in himself all existence, it follows that nothing exists except through him and in him; or, in other words, that he is the inherent cause of all, or rather the substance of all which has being. There is not, and cannot be, then, more than one being, which is God, and the universe is only an infinitely varied manifestation of the infinite attributes of this being. Nothing, then, which includes existence, says Spinoza, can be

denied of God ; and whatever includes it appertains to him and comes from him. God is not only, then, the cause which originates all existence ; he is also the cause which sustains it in being ; in other words, he is at once cause and substance of all that is. Beside God — if any thing can be said to exist beside him — are only his attributes ; and beside these attributes, there can be nothing except different modes of their manifestation. God, therefore, who is the only substance, the infinite attributes of this substance, and the modes of manifestation of these attributes, are the only possible existences. There is and can be nothing more.

Spinoza next inquires as to the manner in which this necessary being, whose essence is existence, develops himself ; and proves that, being in himself necessary, he can only act through and by the necessary laws of his nature, and, consequently, that he cannot be free in the sense in which we understand that word. He ridicules the idea which we form of God, as of a being who acts for a certain end, and because he wills to accomplish that end, but who could yet prefer another, and, consequently, act in another way. He finds this idea wholly incompatible with the idea he has formed of such a being, which he regards as the only legitimate idea ; and he affirms that it inevitably follows, from the necessary nature of such a being, that all the acts and ideas, which are successively developed in him, arise necessarily ; so that nothing which originates from him is produced by free choice ; and the word *will*, therefore, in its common acceptation, cannot be attributed to him. And

yet Spinoza asserts that, in another sense of the word *liberty*, the sense in which he always employs it, God is the only free being. In truth, he says, all thoughts, acts, and possible developments of God, emanate from his own peculiar nature, and not from the influence of another nature acting upon him. God is, then, free, in the sense that whatever he does is determined solely by the laws of his own nature and essential character. The nature of man being limited, as we constantly see it, his acts are determined by external causes, and not by himself; and those causes depend on others, and yet others, till they are traced back to God, while the acts of God are determined only by his own nature. The acts of God, therefore, are at once free and necessary, and free, for the very reason that God is a necessary being. But, as you readily see, there is no similarity between this liberty which Spinoza attributes to God, and liberty as we have conceived of it.

It follows, from this view, that in God there can be neither moral good nor evil. For moral good and evil imply a choice between different courses of conduct; and, since God acts through the necessary laws of his nature, he cannot but do what he actually does; cannot, consequently, act with a view to a certain end, therefore, nor with a purpose to accomplish it; and he cannot, therefore, be either morally good or morally bad; and, in attributing to him, in an infinite degree, the moral qualities which we are conscious of ourselves, we indulge fancies wholly unworthy of the dignity of God, and incompatible with his nature. God wills not; acts not from de-

sign; has no desire, passion, nor disposition. God is; and, this once admitted, all that originates from him is a necessary consequence of his being.

If God's nature is developed thus necessarily, and if nothing exists which does not spring from him, it follows that nothing which is accidental can exist or occur. In other words, all finite existences and their acts, are made and caused by the necessary laws of the divine nature, — God producing directly whatever is derived immediately from his nature and infinite attributes, and indirectly the finite modes of being of these attributes. We call that *contingent* and accidental, says Spinoza, of which we cannot comprehend the necessity; but all which does happen, must happen, and happen, too, exactly in that way. Hence, from the same principles, it appears that the world is eternal, and that the idea of creation is chimerical; for that which at any time did not exist, could never have begun to exist, and there can be nothing beside the being who is one and infinite.

Perhaps, from this one might be led to suppose that, therefore, the universe is God, and that God is only the universe. This opinion Spinoza earnestly repels. The universe, he says, is not God, but only the necessary modes of being of his attributes. God is one, simple, infinite; his modes of being are diverse, complex, finite. God is a necessary being in a twofold manner; because he is self-existent, and because he cannot be conceived of as not existing; his modes of being are necessary, only because they are derived necessarily from his laws; but in one sense they are contingent, that is, they

can be conceived of either as being or not being. God is equally distinct from his attributes; God is infinite, in the absolute sense of that word; his attributes, although infinite, each in its own way, are really finite, since they are many, and one limits the other, each expressing, under one face only, the essence of God, which is existence. The modes are to the attributes what the attributes are to God; and as these attributes are only manifestations of God, and finite in relation to him, so the different modes of each attribute express only that attribute, and are finite, not only in relation to God, but also in relation to that attribute.

It follows, from the relation here described, between God and his attributes, that, as each of them is only a manifestation of God's nature, which is in itself one, God can be conceived of now under one of these attributes, and now under another, but still as remaining himself, simple, and unchanged, amidst the diversity of attributes, which are only different manifestations of one nature, and different developments of one cause. If this is so, there must be a perfect harmony and correspondence between the series of the successive modes of one of these attributes, and the series of the successive modes of all the others. This Spinoza affirms, and he demonstrates it in the case of the two attributes of God, with which alone we are acquainted — thought and extension.

The modes of thought are ideas, and the condition of every idea in God, as in us, must be something objective. What can be objective to the thought of God? Only his own being, that is to say, his

essence, and all which necessarily arises from it. The idea of God, then, is one and infinite, considered in relation to the essence of God, which is one and infinite; but it is manifold in relation to the different attributes of God. Hence the modes of the thought of God, or, in other words, the series of his ideas. As the series of the ideas of God represent the successive modes of his different attributes, the order and connection of the one must be reciprocally the same as that of the other. What God does as a being having extension, he thinks as a being possessed of intelligence; and what he thinks as an intelligent being, he does as a being having extension; the series of his acts and that of his ideas being determined by the same necessity, or, to speak more correctly, the idea and the act being only the same phenomenon under a twofold aspect, as thought and extension are one being under two different manifestations. The circle is a mode of God as he is possessed of extension; the idea of a circle is the corresponding mode of God as thought; and to these two modes there must be a corresponding mode in every other possible attribute of God. Whether we conceive, therefore, of God's nature under the attribute of extension or of thought, or of any other attribute, there will always be the same series, order, connection, and necessary development.

But the thoughts of God have not only the property of representing all his other attributes and their modes; they can also represent themselves. God, in other words, thinks not only of his essence, and

of all which issues from it, but also of his own thoughts; and this must be so, for otherwise his ideas would be less extensive than his nature, and he would be ignorant of one of his own attributes — intelligence. The divine thought, then, is conscious of itself and of its modes, in the same way that it has knowledge of all the other attributes and modes of God. And this property of self-consciousness which belongs to thought it preserves universally. It is essential to its nature.

These considerations, as to the nature and being of God, and much else on the same subject, which I omit, are exhibited in the First Book of the "Ethics," and, in the first part of the Second Book. I will now proceed, having thus given you an idea of his reasoning as to the laws and necessary nature of God, to show you how all bodies and man are viewed in Spinoza's system.

We have seen the manner in which Spinoza, abstracting the idea of existence from those of extension and of thought, proceeds to the idea that God is a being whose essence is existence, of whom thought and extension are only attributes. By the same process of reasoning, applied to what we call *body* and *spirit*, he shows that these two pretended entities are only modes of thought and of extension.

Let us take, he says, any body; for example, some wax. It has this, in common with all other bodies, that it is extended; but, evidently, this is not its characteristic, and, consequently, not its constituent element; for then it would follow that whatever is extended is wax. Extension, then, is simply the

ground-work of body; and that which constitutes each particular body, is a certain manner of extension, or of this something which all bodies have in common. A body of any kind, then, is not extension, but a certain mode of extension; and, as extension is an attribute of God, it follows that all bodies are only different modes of this attribute of God.

It is exactly the same with spirits. The common property of all spirits is thought; but it is not this which distinguishes and constitutes different spirits. For, if any supposed spirit was thought, and thought only, it would follow that all thought was this spirit, which is not and cannot be true. All spirits, therefore, are only different modes of thought, which is an attribute of God.

It is easy now, these positions being once established, to understand the idea which Spinoza forms of the aggregate of bodies and of spirits, which makes up the world as it falls under our observation. The basis of all possible bodies is extension, an attribute of God; the basis of all spirits is thought, also an attribute of God. A body or spirit is, then, only a portion and definite mode of the twofold development of God, as a being of intelligence and a being of extension. A body, in other words, is a portion of the divine extension, or of the infinite series of movements which arise out of it; and a spirit is a portion of the divine thought, or of the infinite series of ideas developed from it. Extension and thought are two parallel streams, of which each separate body and spirit are the waves; and as, in streams, each wave is determined by that which impels



it forward, and this by some other, and thus backward to the source, so the series of movements or ideas constituting each body and spirit is determined by anterior movements or ideas, — anterior while themselves depending on others which preceded them, — and thus upward to God, who is the sole cause of all that happens, as he is the sole substance of all that is.

Hence is it, says Spinoza, that, when we attempt to discover the cause of any material change, or of any idea, we find it always in some antecedent change or idea, and this in the degree in which we are enabled to advance, until we reach the point where the succession of effects and causes is lost to view.

You can readily see the notion of man to which such a doctrine leads. Man is composed of body and of spirit. What is this body? what is this soul? The reply is easy. That which I call *myself*, or my soul, is not a substance, as we imagine — for there is but one substance; and if my soul, therefore, is a substance, then all substance is me. And neither is it thought; or else all thought would be me. It is only, then, and can only be, the succession of those ideas which we are accustomed to say it has, but which really constitute it. My soul, at any one moment, is the sum of the ideas which are then in me. If the wax had the power of perceiving itself, it would believe itself to be the substance subjected to different forms, while it is only these very forms.

My body, in the same way, is neither a substance

nor extension, but merely a succession of certain definite modes of extension. It grows from smaller to larger dimensions, from youth to age, and undergoes perpetual changes, like the soul, only not so apparently. It is but the stream and course of these modifications which are moving on, as the soul is but a current of ideas.

But this body and soul, which are apparently two, really are but one; in other words, what we call the body and the soul are but two aspects of one and the same thing. As, in God, the series of developments in one of his attributes corresponds perfectly with the series of developments in all the others, so, in that portion of the development of the Deity which man is, the series of ideas constituting the soul corresponds exactly to the series of motions constituting the body. Yet more; one of these series is but the image of the other. There can no more be ideas without an object in us than in God. Now, what is or can be the proper object of human ideas, if not the human body? If there is, then, in us a series of ideas constituting our spirits, it is because there is also in us a series of transformations, changes, and affections, constituting the body. The idea which is in us at any given moment is nothing more than the intellectual form of the material movement then taking place. Form to yourself an idea of God, as developing himself through the two attributes of thought and of extension, and arrest by thought a definite portion of this infinite development, which may endure for a time, and you have a man. Now, as all the attributes of God are but different mani-

festations of the same thing, and as the development of one is only the development of the other in another form, it follows that it must be the same in that portion of the divine development which constitutes us. We are, then, one simple thing under a twofold aspect—the intellectual and material; and that which is an idea under one aspect is always a movement under the other, and the reverse.

We have seen that, in God, the attribute of thought represents all the real or possible modes of the other attributes of God, and yet more the modes peculiar to thought itself; for it is the very nature of thought to represent its own modes, as well as all other modes. This peculiar nature of thought is preserved in us. As, in God, thought comprehends itself, so, in us, our thought is self-conscious. At the same time, then, that the series of ideas constituting our minds represents the series of our corporeal emotions, do these ideas also represent themselves; hence our minds have knowledge of themselves, in addition to a knowledge of the peculiar object to which they are directed—that is, the body. This is the phenomenon of self-consciousness, by which we become acquainted with ourselves, while, at the same time, we gain knowledge of what is not ourselves; and this phenomenon is reproduced necessarily among all beings who are modes of the divine thought.

What, then, gentlemen, are we, according to Spinoza? We are a mode of the divine thought, corresponding to a mode of the divine extension, which determines the thought, and is its proper object. The mode of extension is our bodies; the mode of

thought is our minds; and these two perfectly corresponding modes are one and the same phenomenon, which we call man.

The peculiar characteristic distinguishing man from bodies, properly so called, is, that these latter are modes of divine extension only. The modes of extension do not necessarily include the corresponding modes of divine thought. This we see by the beings around us, which are simply extended. Man, who unites in himself these two modes, has twice as much real being as bodies simply extended, and including but one mode.

Having thus explained Spinoza's idea of man, I might leave my consideration of his metaphysical system here, and enter into no further detail of his opinions upon the body and soul. But there are a few more points, which I feel I ought not to leave untouched.

Our bodies, according to Spinoza, are not simple, but are composed of a number of other bodies, which are all different modes of extension. When several bodies are united together, so as to experience the same impressions and emotions, they form an individual; and, so long as the form of the individual exists, the individual exists, however much the parts of which he is composed are changed, increased, or lessened. The human body depends upon the form it assumes rather than upon the elements which compose it. And it is through this form, which is but a result of the union of several bodies, or complex modes of extension, that it is distinguished from other compound bodies.

All changes occurring in our bodies may be resolved, according to Spinoza, into movements; and these movements are determined by other bodies impressing it; and these again are put in motion by yet others; and so on. Spinoza calls these movements *affections*; and says that the nature and number of these affections depend both upon the nature of the body experiencing them, and upon that of the bodies producing them; so that the nature of each affection indicates the nature both of the subject affected, and of the causes which affect it.

As our ideas have no other object than the affections of our bodies, it follows that the more susceptible the body is of affections, the more susceptible the mind is of ideas; and, therefore, that our minds acquire more ideas, in proportion as our bodies are affected by a greater number of external bodies. In other words, the ideas which constitute the human mind are more complex and rich, in proportion as the affections of the body are more and more various.

Every simple idea is, according to Spinoza, an idea of some corporeal affection; but this idea includes several other ideas, besides this one of the affection: first, an idea of the body which is affected; secondly, an idea of the body which has produced the affection; thirdly, an idea of the mind, since every idea is self-conscious, and forms one element of the mind, which itself is only the succession of ideas.

We see from this how it was that Spinoza was led to say that we have no immediate knowledge except through bodily affection, and that it was from

the idea of our bodily affections that all human knowledge took its origin. This idea is, you see, full of instruction, as it leads directly to the ideas of our own minds, of our bodies, and of other bodies. I beg you to notice that this is exactly the opinion of Condillac; and we need only substitute the word *sensation* for *affection*, which represents the same thing, in the following passage from the *Ethica*, and we should think we were reading from the *Traité de Sensations*. "We know our own bodies only through its affections, we know external bodies only through the affections of our own, and we know our spirits only through the idea of these affections." This resemblance to Condillac's system, which you may trace in the opinion of Spinoza, that *the soul is the sum of the ideas which are brought together at any one moment*, will continually strike you as I present other points of his metaphysical system.

If the whole of intellectual effort was limited to the operation now described, we should, according to Spinoza, have only confused and inadequate ideas. The knowledge that we obtain of our own and other bodies, from the ideas of our affections, is indirect, and, as such, incomplete, and therefore confused; and, for the same reason, the knowledge that they give us of the affections, which they represent, is equally imperfect and obscure. For an adequate idea of these affections would suppose an adequate knowledge of the subject affected, and of the causes producing the affections. And, finally, since the

idea of the affections of our body is inadequate and obscure, the idea of these ideas, which is the idea of our own minds, must be also obscure and inadequate. So that if human knowledge remains always in the state in which *simple perception*, to use the words of Spinoza, gives it to us, we should have only such confused ideas, as all the ideas of our affections, of our minds, of our bodies, and of other bodies, must be.

Fortunately, according to Spinoza, our ideas are not limited to those which we receive when we are made *to perceive* (*ad percipiendum*) *by the current of external movements*. We obtain ideas having a very different character, *when we are determined from within to conceive* (*ad intelligendum*) of agreements and differences, by a simultaneous contemplation of several ideas. In this case we can arrive at adequate and clear ideas.

Spinoza admits, then, that, after the particular and immediate ideas of the affections of our body, and all others implied by these, have been introduced, they are submitted to a process by which we are enabled to form general ideas, which are adequate and clear. Thus three points are established in the system of Spinoza: first, that all our knowledge comes from the affections of our bodies; second, that all simple ideas, and all such ideas of our mind, of our own body, or of other bodies, as naturally rise out of these simple ideas, are essentially inadequate and obscure; third, and last, that the only ideas which can be clear and adequate are general ideas, such

as we deduce from the former kind of ideas, by an inward effort, subsequent to perception, and distinct from it.

The nature of this process of mind is the most obscure part of Spinoza's doctrine; and I think I do not deceive myself in asserting, that here is the source of the whole difficulty which is felt in understanding his system. All other portions of it become intelligible, if we give them attentive and patient study.

It has been a question whether Spinoza considers this mental process as a necessary and spontaneous one, or whether he thinks that we must contribute our own efforts to aid it, thus ascribing to man some influence and power in the formation of his own ideas. If we consider only the principles of the system, and the expressions which Spinoza employs to describe this process of the mind, obscure as they are, we shall be led to the first opinion. Since all our ideas are determined by the series of the affections of our body, and since these are determined by external causes, which are determined by God, it is evident that all our ideas must be determined by God. But there is a still greater objection to the idea that they are determined by ourselves. Our minds are only the sum of our ideas; before we can suppose that the mind has any influence over the formation of our ideas, we must suppose it distinct from them; for it is impossible to imagine that a mind, which is but an aggregate of ideas, can aid in the formation of those very ideas of which it is itself the effect, result, and product. If true, then, to the



principles of his system, Spinoza could not, without a strange contradiction, attribute to the mind any participation in the process to which the simple ideas of perception are subjected; and, as I said before, in his description of this process, there is no expression which would authorize us to say that he had fallen into this contradiction. But when he comes to the moral part of his system, which I shall describe in my next lecture, we are induced to adopt an opposite opinion; for in this portion of his work, Spinoza evidently ascribes to man a certain kind of influence over the formation of his ideas. He there says that *liberty* is this power exerted by us over our ideas; he recommends that we should turn away our minds from certain ideas, and fix them upon others; and he gives an essay upon the proper conduct of the mind; and it is upon this idea of their power to direct and form certain ideas, that Spinoza's whole system of ethics is founded. Had Spinoza been a less exact reasoner, we should not hesitate to say, that he had here, like many other philosophers, been inconsistent, and had contradicted his own principles; but we must be more cautious in making this charge upon such a writer as the author of the "Ethics;" and when we reflect upon the enormity of such a contradiction, we can hardly escape the impression that this vigorous mind was deceived by some logical illusion, which it would be very desirable to discover. If there was, to his mind, such an illusion any where, it was, doubtless, in his idea of the intellectual process by which general ideas are produced. And it is for this reason, that I call this portion of his system the most

obscure; for it is here only that we meet with real difficulties in the way of comprehending it. I confess, gentlemen, that I have not been able to surmount these difficulties; the illusion by which Spinoza was deceived, I have not been able to discover. The opinion he seems to have formed, and which I will now describe, of the nature of the intellectual operation by which the mind is raised from particular and immediate to ultimate and general ideas, is perfectly consistent with the principles of his system, and leaves wholly unexplained the contradiction into which, as I shall show in the next lecture, he has fallen.

Human knowledge would be reduced to the immediate notions of perception only, if, after these ideas were obtained, there was no mode of preserving or recalling them. But this can be done, and in this way: The action of external causes upon the body has the effect of modifying the state of those parts of the body upon which they act; and the impression produced by them does not disappear altogether with the action of the causes; when this action is strong or frequent, the impression remains after the action, and the parts affected finally acquire a permanent disposition for receiving these impressions. These remaining influences on the affections become ideas in the mind equally with the affections themselves.

The ideas corresponding to these surviving impressions of the affections Spinoza calls *images* or *remembrances*—ideas, properly so called, which represent the affections themselves; and they constitute what he denominates the *imagination* or *memory*.

One other fact in our nature completes the explanation of the operation of memory, and that is the analogy existing among the corporeal dispositions which constitute certain affections. By reason of this analogy, whenever we experience one kind of affection, analogous to others which we have often felt, and which have thus left in the body a disposition to reproduce them, the former affection causes the body to replace itself in a condition to receive the latter, so that these last are renewed mechanically; and, since they in turn may awaken other analogous ones, it follows that one single affection may produce the impression of a thousand different ones; and hence the mind experiences, subsequent to the reception of an idea, long trains of images and remembrances; and this constitutes the phenomena of the association of ideas, of imagination, and of memory.

Thus our minds, at any one moment, are made up, not only of the ideas of the affections which have been impressed, and of other ideas which these imply, but also of a greater or less number of remembrances, that is to say, of ideas of past affections.

But these ideas are, as we have said, self-conscious. And consciousness, while comprehending them, comprehends also the agreements and differences between them, and, consequently, between whatever objects they represent. Hence a new class of ideas—ideas of relation, or general ideas—ideas which are ultimate and wholly distinct from the immediate ideas acquired from perception.

Such, gentlemen, is that intellectual effort which I before alluded to : perception gives us the materials,

and the operation consists wholly in bringing together these materials, by the influence of memory and making a comparison.

But this comparison is wholly mechanical, and Spinoza has taken care to state that it is so. There are not ideas recalled and compared on the one side, and a mind recalling and comparing them on the other. The impressions left on the affections are necessarily awakened in the body, and these are necessarily represented by ideas in the mind, and these ideas are necessarily compared by their mere juxtaposition, whence result ideas, necessarily formed, of their agreements and differences; and this is all. There is nothing here in any way resembling the intervention of the mind. The mind continues to be the sum of our ideas, and this sum is only increased by a new class of ideas. This is all.

I need hardly say that these general ideas, once formed, are subject to the same law with immediate ideas; that is, they can be recalled like them, and can produce, as they do, when brought together, ideas yet more general, which, in turn, may give rise to others yet more general, and so on; let it be remarked, however, that all these ideas, however general, have one characteristic, which is, that they are not immediate, that is, not simple *perceptions*, but derived, or *conceptions*, as Spinoza calls them.

We have seen that Spinoza considers all immediate ideas as essentially inadequate and confused. It is not necessarily so, according to him, with derived ideas, whose formation we have now explained; these may be clear and adequate, and for this reason.

What is the truth of an idea? asks Spinoza. It is the conformity of the idea to whatever it represents; but since the condition of the origin of an idea is the existence of the object awakening it, there can be no idea without something of which it is the representation; every idea has, therefore, some truth; the only difference between ideas is this, that some represent completely their object, while others do not; the former are adequate ideas, the latter are inadequate; ideas then are false only from their deficiency in not representing the whole of their object; so far as they do represent it, they are true; their truth is positive, their falseness is negative.

There is an identity, therefore, between an adequate idea and a complete or true idea, on the one side, and between an inadequate and false idea, on the other. But how can we tell whether an idea is adequate or inadequate? By what sign or criterion shall we judge? By its clearness, says Spinoza. Whence, then, comes the confusion of some ideas? Solely from their incompleteness, that is to say, their inadequate representation of their objects; for if they represented the whole of their object, they could not be obscure. Every clear idea is, therefore, an adequate one, and every confused idea an inadequate one. It is by their clearness or their confusion, then, that we are to determine whether our ideas are true or false, adequate or inadequate.

If our immediate ideas cannot be adequate, it must be as Spinoza has proved, because they correspond to particular objects, all the circumstances and details of which we cannot fully know; and it is in conse-

quence of their inadequacy that they are all essentially obscure and imperfectly true. On the contrary, our derived ideas may be adequate, and, consequently, clear, for the reason that they represent not particular objects, and, therefore, very complicated ones, but general ones, much less complex than particulars, and becoming less and less so as they become more general.

Let us take, for example, the particular facts which we call the *affections* of the body. We cannot perfectly know any one of these affections, precisely because it is a particular affection. But suppose several inadequate ideas of many affections brought together by memory; the agreement of these different ideas will then appear, and create a general idea of whatever is in common among these affections, that is to say, of that particular characteristic which constitutes them affections. This common and constituent characteristic is infinitely more simple than either of the particular phenomena in which it is manifested; and we can, therefore, for this reason, form a much less inadequate idea of it, and, consequently, a much less confused and false one.

Bring now this general idea of an affection into comparison with other general ideas of the same kind, analogous to it, and there will evidently arise an idea, the object of which will be still simpler, and which will have still greater chance, therefore, of being adequate, clear, and true. Whence it may be seen that our ideas are more adequate, true and clear, in proportion as the object is more general, and as they, consequently, become more general themselves.

Such, gentlemen, according to my understanding of it, is the logic of Spinoza. It is, I should say, — and you will easily see that it is, — perfectly consistent with his ontology. For, if there is but one substance developing itself under an infinity of attributes, of which the particular objects around us are only infinitely varied modes, that which is the most general, that is to say, the whole itself, or God, is also the most simple and real, and that which is the most particular and complex, that is to say, bodies and minds, must also be most complex and phenomenal; so that what is most simple and real, according to the common notion, is precisely what is least real and most complex, according to Spinoza; and real being and unity increase, in his view, in the same proportion as abstraction and multiplicity do in ours. The world, to him, is only the multiplied developments of a single being, while, to us, this being is the collection of a multiplicity of individual beings. Real being, to our minds, is in the elements of the whole, while the whole itself is an abstraction. To Spinoza, real being consists in this whole, which is itself being, while all else is only phenomenal, and more and more phenomenal as it is more and more individual.

I have now said, gentlemen, all that I proposed to say upon the metaphysical portion of Spinoza's system. In my next lecture, I will unfold and exhibit its moral part.

## LECTURE VII.

## THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

GENTLEMEN,

IN my last lecture, I finished what I had proposed to say of the metaphysical and logical system of Spinoza. I proceed now to attempt to give you some general idea of the moral part of his system. The long developments into which I allowed myself to be led, at our last meeting, warn me to limit myself in this discussion, unless I intend giving an undue place in my course to the doctrine of this philosopher.

You will remember that, in the view of Spinoza, the human soul is only a succession of ideas, and that these are only the representation of different changes taking place in the human body. You will remember also, that we are not thence to conclude that man is composed of two parts, one of which we call the body, and the other the soul; for, according to Spinoza's idea, these are but one. Man is one being under a twofold aspect—the aspect of mind, or his ideas—the aspect of extension, or his body;—so that all which happens to a man appears necessarily under the two forms of affections and ideas,



which express, in two different and yet corresponding ways, one and the same phenomenal development, which is man. But you know also, that, in the system of Spinoza, the human body is only a definite mode of extension, which is an attribute of God, and the human mind a correspondent mode of thought, which is another attribute of God. The extension, constituting our body, therefore, and the idea constituting our souls, are only portions of the development of divine thought and extension. You will understand, therefore, these two definitions of Spinoza, that the human mind is God, considered as constituting the soul; and the human body is God, considered as constituting the body. God is at once, then, finite, in so far as he constitutes our body or soul; and infinite, in so far as he does not constitute it. Under the first view, his power and knowledge are limited; under the second, they are not. All the mysterious phrases of the *Ethica* become clear, when we once know that, according to Spinoza, the ideas which constitute our minds, and the movements which constitute our bodies, (for body, be it remembered, consists in its form, and not in its material,) are only fragments of a twofold development of God — the development of his thought and of his extension. In this point of view, it is speaking truly, to say, that God constitutes our bodies and our minds, and that his power and his knowledge are finite, in so far as he does constitute them. We have not all ideas, but only some ideas; and, because we have only these few, most of our ideas are inadequate and confused. God, therefore, in so far as he constitutes us, is

limited in his knowledge, and has, consequently, inadequate and confused ideas; but in himself it is not thus; for in so far as he does not constitute us, he has all the ideas which we have, and all other ideas which can serve to render these clear and adequate. Again, the power of our bodies is limited by the resistance of other bodies. God, in so far as he constitutes our bodies, is limited in his power; but he is not thus limited in himself, for all the causes which limit our power are modes of the divine power, even as our power is itself. So far, then, as our body is finite, God is limited by himself; consequently, he is not limited in his own being, but only in so far as he constitutes our body. It follows from this, that ideas which are inadequate in us, are not inadequate in God, except in so far as he is considered as constituting our minds; and that our finite power is not finite in God, except in so far as he constitutes our body. These distinctions may seem frivolous to you, but it is absolutely necessary that they should be made, if we would understand Spinoza's system.

As our minds are made up of ideas, it is plain that the more ideas we have, and the clearer and more adequate they are, the more real and living will be our minds. This proposition is proved by arithmetical calculation in the system of Spinoza. The soul being at every moment the sum of its then present ideas, of course a soul made up of twenty ideas will have more life, more perfection, more real being, than another composed of six. If the twenty ideas are clear, adequate, and true, the mind will be more per-

fect, real, and living, than if they were inadequate and confused. As the essence of the soul is ideas, it is these ideas which constitute its real being; and it will be more and more perfect, in proportion as it has more ideas, and as these are more and more clear. Applying this same principle to the body, that is to say, to the mode of extension, which is constantly impressed, restrained, and limited by other bodies acting upon it, we shall find that the body, too, has more and more real being and perfection, in proportion as it is less and less limited by external bodies, that is to say, in proportion as it develops itself with the greatest fulness and freedom through its own natural energy.

In the moral part of his system, Spinoza wholly leaves out of view the body, and makes the soul, that is to say, man, considered under the aspect of thought, the chief object of his attention. The three last books of his work are occupied altogether with his opinions upon the real life, perfection, and well-being of this portion of human nature.

The laws of its growth or decline, the means by which the real life, perfection, and well-being of the soul are increased or diminished, engages his whole attention; and it is here that we must follow his course of reasoning most closely, if we would gain an insight into the fundamental ideas of his ethics, politics, and religion.

Every being has, necessarily, a tendency and desire; and this necessary tendency and desire is to continue in the condition for which its nature fits it.

The essence of God is existence, and his necessary

desire, therefore, is to remain in existence. And, since God includes all existence, and his existence, therefore, is not and cannot be limited by any existence beyond and out of himself, it follows, that God is absolutely perfect, and, consequently, is completely happy. But it is not thus with the human soul.

As an emanation from God, the human soul participates in the fundamental desire of God, and also aspires to a continuance of existence, as a created being. And, as the constituent element of the soul is knowledge, and this knowledge is limited, it follows that this fundamental desire of continuance in its own state of existence, which every being feels, must in the soul become a desire to remain intelligent, and, since its knowledge is limited, to extend and enlarge it. Such is and must be, necessarily, the fundamental and peculiar tendency of the human mind. And it is for this reason that Spinoza confines exclusively to this tendency the name of *desire*; it is the only desire which he acknowledges and recognizes.

But the ideas constituting the human soul are limited by external causes, which determine their number, and render them inadequate and confused; in other words, the fundamental desire of our nature meets abroad with influences, both favorable and unfavorable, whose whole operation, however, is to limit and fix bounds to our knowledge. These influences, coming into contact with our fundamental desire, give us joy or pain, and awaken love and hope, hate and aversion. Hence the secondary emotions of the primitive

and fundamental desire existing from the first within us, which Spinoza denominates the *passions*. The reason for the use of these two different names is this profound observation, that the secondary emotions proceed from the action of external causes, and, consequently, that we are passive in experiencing these emotions, while, on the contrary, the tendency to preserve, unchanged, our original nature, is innate, arises from the very depths of our being, and develops itself even when no external cause affects us. Here is a difference well expressed by the terms *desire* and *passion*, as applied by Spinoza to these two kinds of emotions.

Spinoza, however, while distinguishing passion from desire, points out the tie which unites these two orders of facts; it is indeed plain that if the desire of continuance in being did not exist, external causes could not excite the emotions of joy or sorrow, love or hate, hope or fear, now constituting our passions. All the passions which are awakened within us presuppose, therefore, the fundamental desire already existing and active. Moreover, it is plain that these passions are only different expressions of this desire; all the passions are, in truth, composed of the same elements, that is to say, of a sorrow or dislike, of a joy or love, of a hope or fear; they are distinguished from each other only by the causes which excite them. Now, all these emotions of aversion or love, of fear or hope, of joy or sorrow, denote equally a desire to remain in being, and in intelligence. All the tendencies of our soul are reduced,

therefore, to this single one, and have all of them but one single object, which is the preservation and increase of our being or our knowledge.

As knowledge is the constituent element of our soul, the desire of knowledge is the desire of enlarging our actual being, and of lessening our imperfections. Nothing, then, can be more proper, more conformable to reason, than the end to which our desire and passions tend. This end is the greatest degree of real existence, the highest perfection of our being. All that we can do, therefore, to attain this end, is lawful and right, and the pursuit of it is *virtue*. There is entire harmony, then, between virtue and happiness, since both consist in the greatest possible satisfaction of our fundamental desire, and of all the passions which are excited by it, and which express it. Thus Spinoza arrives at the conclusion, which he lays down as a principle, that the satisfaction of passion is the end of virtue, and that we are virtuous in proportion as we extend this satisfaction, that is to say, as we are happy.

Thus knowledge, existence, real being, perfection, virtue, happiness, are all but one and the same thing, under different aspects. As the soul is composed of ideas, and as the legitimate end of every being is self-preservation, the proper end of the soul is the most complete and extensive knowledge possible. To this end, approved by reason, all the passions of the soul aspire; to strive to attain it is virtue; to succeed in acquiring it is happiness, that is to say, the perfection or real life of the soul. Such are the fundamental principles of Spinoza's ethical system.

It remains now for us to examine what means we have at our disposal, according to Spinoza, for the attainment of this end, which includes at once our real life, our perfection, and our happiness; and it is here that the difficulties, alluded to in my former lecture, appear — difficulties which show the contradictions with which, as it appears to me, this system must be charged.

Spinoza has, in the first place, said, that all the ideas which can arise in our minds are only determinate portions of the ideas of God, and that they all, whether immediate or derived, are produced by necessity; and yet he affirms that we can influence their development. In the second place, he lays down the position, that our ideas are the very component element of our minds, and yet asserts that the mind exercises a control over the formation of the ideas of which it is composed. Here is the radical contradiction lurking throughout his whole system. All who have attempted to describe his doctrines have perceived it; no one has succeeded in explaining it, and I have not been more fortunate; I limit myself, therefore, to a simple statement of the contradiction, and pass to the mode of moral progress which Spinoza marks out for the soul to pursue, in attaining its final end and destiny.

If the perfection of the soul consists in the extent and truth of its constituent ideas, the object of moral effort evidently must be to diminish, as much as possible, our inadequate and obscure ideas, and to multiply, as much as possible, our clear and adequate ideas; and the mode of accomplishing this, according

to Spinoza, is to withdraw our minds from one mode of acquiring knowledge, and to direct them towards another. Now, what is the most desirable kind of knowledge? And why is it most desirable? I will endeavor to answer these questions, by recalling to your minds some of the principles of Spinoza's logical system, already exhibited in the former lecture. They are, at once, so important, and yet so obscure, that perhaps it may be well for me to review rapidly what I then stated upon the subject.

The primitive ideas of our minds, you will remember, are nothing, according to Spinoza, but the images of the affections of our bodies; and these affections themselves originate in the action of external causes upon us. These ideas are essentially inadequate, and yet they comprehend in themselves all the ideas which we can have immediately. They are inadequate, in the first place, because it is necessary, before we can have an adequate idea of an affection of our body, that we should understand the nature of that body, and of the causes which affect it. But we gain a knowledge of external causes, and of the body itself, only through these very affections; we have, therefore, only indirect and essentially incomplete ideas of the body, and of outward objects; and yet more, if this is so, the idea we have of the affection itself is confused and inadequate; our ideas, then, of our bodily affections, and of our own and other bodies, are, by necessity, confused and incomplete; and, finally, our consciousness of these ideas must be so too;—so that all the ideas which we receive immediately are



inadequate. It is from this very fact of the inadequacy of our ideas, that our passions arise; for, if all our ideas were clear and complete, our desire of knowledge would be entirely satisfied; and, consequently, we should not experience the joy or sorrow, the love or hate, the hopes or fears, which constitute all passion, and originate in the imperfectness of our ideas. And whence springs all evil within us? From this same imperfection, and from the passions caused by it, which disturb our peace and prevent our happiness. Inadequate ideas are, therefore, at once the source of all passion, and of all pain; and all the simple ideas of perception are of this nature.

And now, what shall we do to acquire clear and adequate ideas? If we had no other mode of gaining knowledge, and of obtaining ideas, than the perception of our corporeal affections, we should be indeed perplexed, and all virtue, all perfection, would be evidently impossible. But, independently of these ideas, received from the affections of the body, we can, as I have already said, attain to a higher order of ideas, drawn from these simple ideas by a subsequent effort of the mind. The impressions of corporeal affections do not disappear when the external cause which produced them ceases to act. The parts of the body which are affected contract a disposition to reproduce the emotion which characterizes these affections; and they do reproduce them, whenever any analogous affection is excited;—so that an affection of the body is accompanied by the reproduction of a number of kindred affections, associated by analogy; and an idea in the mind is accompanied

by a series of images and remembrances corresponding to the affections thus awakened; or, in other words, by the simultaneous presence in our minds of a crowd of different ideas; some, *ideas*, properly so called, and others, images and recollections.

From this concurrence of our ideas arises the fact of a comparison passed between them; and, from this comparison springs a wholly new class of ideas, not representing, as before, a particular affection or external object, not our body or spirit at any given moment, but, instead, the common element of many affections and external objects, of many states of our bodies and minds.

Observe now, that the element which our affections have in common, is the essence itself of affection; that the common element of different external bodies, and of different states of our own body, is the very essence of body; and that the common element of different states of mind, is the essence of our mind, and of all mind.

It is not true in relation to these essential elements of all affections, and bodies, and spirits, as it is of particular affections or bodies, of particular states of our own bodies or spirits, that we can have only inadequate and obscure ideas, on account of their complexity. The characteristics of the essence of any thing are few, and are constantly reappearing in every particular idea of it which may occur to us, however inadequate this may be, and are easily distinguished by a comparison of many particular ideas; so that it is easy to have an adequate idea of these characteristics, and, consequently, of the essence

of which they are the component parts. This class of ideas, representing the essences of things, and arising from a comparison of particular and immediate ideas, or, in other words, these general ideas, may easily, therefore, become adequate and clear. And it is for this reason that, while we can never form an adequate idea of any particular affection, or external body, or given state of our minds and bodies, we yet can have perfectly adequate ideas of affection in general, of the constituent element of body, which is extension, or of that of mind, which is thought. If this, now, is true of general ideas, arising from the comparison of particular ideas, it is much truer of the more general ideas which arise from the comparison of less general ones; so that the property of adequateness, clearness, and truth, constantly increases in proportion to the general nature of our ideas, and becomes absolute and complete when the ideas are universal.

By applying this law to the progress of mind, we shall obtain the following method of logic and of ethics.

If we allow ourselves to be wholly occupied by the particular ideas, which the moving current of things suggests, our knowledge will be always inadequate and confused, and we shall remain at the lowest stage of real being and of possible perfection: yet more, since these ideas, in proportion to their inadequacy and obscurity, excite in higher and higher degrees all the passions which agitate us, we shall be utterly wretched.

To elevate ourselves above this state of extreme imperfection and misery, we must turn our thoughts

to those general ideas, which spring from a comparison of particular ideas, and, representing the essences of things, may, with more probability, be adequate and clear; and this course we must pursue to the utmost possible extent. Our first step will be to attain to general ideas of the attributes of God, and next to the universal idea of God himself, which is the ultimate limit of human knowledge; for this idea embraces at once all that is most simple and most complete — the eternal, necessary, and immutable substance of all existence.

This view naturally leads Spinoza to distinguish three degrees of human knowledge. The first degree of knowledge comprehends the particular and immediate ideas, which arise from the perception of bodily affections. The multitude of men seldom rise above this, and hence the confused notions, the passions and the misery of the mass of mankind. The second degree of knowledge comprehends the general ideas which result from experience, and which, in proportion as they are more or less clearly conceived, represent, more or less adequately, the infinite, eternal, and immutable attributes of God. In its third degree, knowledge concentrates itself into one idea, which presupposes all general ideas — the absolute and universal idea of God. Sages alone, who devote their lives to meditation, can attain to this height of knowledge and of peace. Here, and here only, is peace. For since God is the first principle and cause of all things, the idea of God is not only more simple than all other ideas, but a light to make them clear and perfect, so that they can become fully adequate

only through this idea. He who has not comprehended God, in other words, can comprehend nothing perfectly; each particular is included in the general, and the general in the universal; and, therefore, the conception of God is implied in all other conceptions, and every conception remains incomplete and obscure, until the idea of God is conceived. We can attain perfectly adequate and clear knowledge only in the idea of God; here the mind finds the highest reality, the fullest existence, sovereign perfection, entire repose, and complete felicity; with this it can destroy passion, and wholly satisfy our fundamental desire of knowledge; so that absolute perfection and happiness would be possible for man in this life, if he could here attain to a complete idea of God. But to this his power is not equal. We may form an adequate idea of the essence of God; but the infinity of the attributes through which this essence is developed, and the infinity of the modes of these attributes, escape us; of these attributes, two only are accessible to us, and we know only a small part of the modes even of these two attributes. Thus, while the complete idea of God would be universal science, since God contains all that is or can be, yet for God alone is this science possible, because he alone can know himself completely.

Such, gentlemen, is the path, marked out by Spinoza, for man to reach his highest possible perfection and happiness. You will see that he has thus, at the same time, shown what course the soul should pursue to arrive at the most complete knowledge, and what it should itself become; for, since,

in Spinoza's doctrine, the soul is made up of ideas, science and the perfection of the soul are one and the same. Logic and ethics are identified, therefore, in this system, and the method which leads to good, is precisely that which leads to truth.

It remains for me to show you how this same path leads to immortality. Here, perhaps, is the most singular and original point of view of this vast system; and it is the last that I shall mention.

I have already told you, that the condition or the origin of every idea is the existence of an object: as an idea is only a representation, there can be no idea without an object represented. It follows, as a strict consequence from this principle, that, so long as our ideas represent only the affections of the body, and imply these affections, or, in other words, our own body and external bodies, our ideas exist only through the existence of these affections, which themselves presuppose the body. If, then, our body ever ceases to be, since its affections will also be destroyed at the same time, all our ideas will be destroyed; and, as the soul is only the collection of our ideas, the soul will be, together with them, utterly annihilated. It follows from this, that in men who have only ideas of particulars, or those of perception, the death of the soul will result from that of the body, and be its necessary consequence; for them immortality is impossible.

But suppose that, by intellectual effort, we disengage from our ideas of particulars the general ideas which they imply, and thus obtain clear views of that which is at the foundation of all objects and of all

particular phenomena; that is to say, clear views of the essence of things, or of those attributes of God which we are capable of conceiving, then, although our body is destroyed, objects will yet remain for human thought, and ideas will still be possible. The ideas composing our soul will not all vanish with the body, according to this hypothesis; that part only of the soul will disappear which represents particulars; the rest will remain and survive.

But let us go yet further, and suppose that, from the idea of God's attributes, we have ascended to the idea of God himself; here is an eternal, infinite, immutable object for human thought, remaining forever as the material of ideas, and of adequate and numerous ideas; for from the depth of the idea of God spring up a host of other ideas contained in it, which are multiplied in proportion as they are contemplated for a greater length of time. Hence a multitude of ideas remain possible, even after the death of the body, and an amount of existence for the soul, which cannot be destroyed or undergo a change.

But upon what does it depend whether this shall be our condition in the hour of death? It depends upon ourselves, gentlemen, because we can, if we choose, turn our thoughts away from particulars, and raise them to generals, and fix them there. Our immortality depends, then, upon ourselves, and is the fruit of virtue, as perfection and happiness are. It is for us to create for ourselves, during life, an object of thought, separate from our bodies, and from all bodies which surround us,—an object which may

remain when our bodies shall disappear, and with them all possibility of affections, and with these affections all possibility of perceiving external bodies; and we shall attain this end, and reach this object, if we turn away our thoughts from transient things, and raise them to those which, having eternal existence, will abide forever; and, by this everlasting endurance, will preserve also in existence a portion of our souls, that is to say, of the ideas of which they are composed.

Such is the singular opinion of Spinoza, relative to the immortality of the soul; and you see how far it is a necessary consequence of his doctrine, when the possibility of our giving direction to the mind is once admitted. It follows from this, that human souls have real being in very unequal degrees, and that this varies with the nature as well as number of their component ideas. Souls made up entirely of immediate ideas have only a feeble reality, and will perish with the body. The sum of the constituent ideas of other souls may, at each moment, be divided into two parts; the one, perishable, composed of ideas, representing individual and particular objects, and wholly inadequate and confused; the other, immortal, composed of adequate and clear ideas, representing unchangeable objects, that is to say, the attributes of God and God himself. At any given moment, our real being, our perfection, our happiness, are in direct proportion to the number of these last ideas, and in inverse ratio to the number of the former. Our perfection, happiness, and



real life, therefore, increase with the sum of our adequate ideas; and, since this increase depends upon our virtue, our measure of existence during life, and our immortality, depend upon it also. In pursuing our true end, therefore, we increase, not only our happiness and perfection, but also the sum and duration of our existence.

Such, gentlemen, are the principal points of Spinoza's moral system. I feel that I ought once again to say, that I am unable to reconcile this portion of his opinions with those principles which he has professed in relation to God and man, and which I have described in a former lecture. Still it is undeniable that these two portions of his system do coëxist, and, therefore, it was my duty to give you an idea of the second, as well as of the first, if I would not leave incomplete this rapid exposition. It was necessary, also, to prepare you for an understanding of the ethics of Spinoza, which I shall exhibit to you hereafter, and to explain the existence of any such thing as ethics in the most vast, most absolute, and, notwithstanding this contradiction, the most rigorous system of pantheism, which the hand of philosophy has ever reared.

I have now completed my sketch of the particular form which Spinoza has given to pantheism; but I should neglect the original and principal design of this exposition, if I did not, before passing on to other systems, disengage, from this particular form, the specific character of pantheism itself, and show you how, by reason of its essential quality, it always

leads, by a strict necessity, to the denial of human liberty, and consequently to the belief that a law of obligation is impossible.

One essential and constituent element of pantheism is the suppressing of all particular causes, and the concentrating of all causality in a single being; that is, in God. This arises from another element of pantheism, yet more essential, which consists in suppressing all particular beings, and concentrating all existence in one sole being, which is God. If there is but one substance, there is but one cause; for without substance there can be only phenomena; and phenomena can only transmit action; they cannot produce it. Pantheism, laying down the principle, therefore, that there can be only one being and one cause, and that the universe is only a vast phenomenon, necessarily concentrates in God all liberty, even if it attributes liberty to him, and necessarily denies it every where else. Man and all other beings, therefore, lose their quality of *being* and of *cause*, and become only attributes and acts of the divine substance and cause. Deprived thus of all proper causality, man is also deprived, at the same time, of all liberty, and, consequently, can have neither a law of obligation, nor a controlling power over his own conduct. Such are the evident and necessary consequences of pantheism; and the pantheist, who does not adopt them, either does not comprehend his own opinions, or is voluntarily false to them.

Thus, wherever pantheism manifests itself in a practical form;—as in India, for example,—it leads directly to passiveness or licentiousness. Men brought

up in this faith, considering themselves as phenomena, and their acts, whatever they may do, as the acts of God, view all conduct with indifference; and this leads them either to commit the most detestable acts without remorse, or to abandon themselves without care or thought to the currents of that mighty ocean, on whose bosom they are but insignificant drops. Such are the fruits which this system has always produced in the East, and they are its legitimate results; pantheism should never disavow them.

You will thus see, gentlemen, that I had reason for classing the system of pantheism among those which render, *à priori*, the existence of a law of obligation impossible; and, if it is ground enough upon which to condemn any doctrine as false that it leads to such a result, pantheism must be condemned. Does it deserve this sentence? Does pantheism, like necessity and mysticism, rest, for its foundation, upon error? To my mind, it is undeniable that it does; and a few words only will be needed to point out to you the source of this system in human nature, and its radical defect.

We have two kinds of knowledge, derived from different sources. When we direct our perceptive faculties to that portion of real being which is actually before us and within our reach, there arise in our minds ideas or notions, which are images of what we have observed. Hence the first kind of knowledge, given by observation, whose characteristic it is to represent whatever observation has grasped—or, in other words, whatever actually is. If all our knowledge was of this kind, we should

possess, indeed, particular and even general truths, representing a portion of what actually exists and happens; but it is plain that we should possess nothing which reached to or represented what ought to be: that is to say, we should know only a portion of that which now is and now happens, and not all which can be and can happen. Now that we have knowledge, — the truth of which does reach to all possible cases, — does embrace all times, — and represent not only the portion of real being observed by us, but all reality, — this, gentlemen, is undeniable; and equally undeniable is it, that observation could never have given us such knowledge, for observation extends only to a determined and circumscribed portion of real being, and, consequently, can never produce more than particular and limited notions.

Universal notions, therefore, must spring from another source, and that is reason. The observation of certain facts, now existing, is the occasion when reason conceives at once of other facts, which cannot but be, and which, having thus a necessary existence, must always have been, and will always be; and hence arise truths, limited to no time nor place, and applicable to all possible cases. Such, for instance, is the truth, that every effect has a cause — a truth which reason instantly conceives when a fact is seen to occur, and which, when once conceived, extends to all cases, all times, all places, appears to us universal, absolute, without possible exception, and seems, in a word, to represent and express not only that which is, but also that which must be and cannot but be.

There are, therefore, in our minds, two kinds of knowledge, and two distinct sources of knowledge; first, particular and general knowledge, representing what now is, and obtained by observation; and, secondly, universal and absolute knowledge, representing what ought to be, and which is the fruit of the *à priori* conceptions of reason.

And now, when we apply to truth of this latter kind, that is to say, to the absolute principles, conceived *à priori* by reason, the reasoning, which is quite another thing from reason, and draw from these principles the logical consequences flowing from them, we arrive at an idea of the world, which does not agree at all with the idea obtained from observation; reason conceiving, *à priori*, that which ought to be, and observation testifying to that which now is.

It is to the former of these two modes of obtaining knowledge, that pantheism trusts. The pantheist takes, then, absolute principles, conceived, *à priori*, by the reason, and the notions of cause, of being, of time, space, &c., comprehended and implied in these principles; and then applying reasoning to these premises, he determines, by logical deduction, what real being must be, without taking any count of the testimony given directly to all men, by observation, of a portion of what actually now is.

Such is the manner in which pantheism acquires knowledge; and here we discover the source of the false idea given by it of all things. Had God willed that we should become acquainted with his works

by reason only, he would not have endowed us with this other faculty, which we call observation; and as he has given us this latter faculty, and inspired us also with a faith in the notions which it produces, these notions cannot be useless; and must be destined to enter, as an element, and play some part in our acquisition of the knowledge of real being; in a word, these notions must be intended to modify, in some sort, such notions of real being as are given by simple reasoning, when applied to the *à priori* principles conceived by reason.

This coöperation of observation with reason, pantheism slights; this correction, applied by it to the wholly ideal system given by reason, pantheism rejects; it finds nothing in the idea which observation gives of the world. Here is the error, the radical error of pantheism; and, if we would attack the system, here is its vulnerable part. We must examine the contradictions between the results of pantheism and of observation, and the ground of the pantheist's contempt for observation; and, if such contempt is groundless, and he yet will not admit the correction which observation brings to the pure ideas of reason, then have we a right to reproach him with not respecting the whole of human intelligence; but, with mutilating it, by demanding of one of its faculties that representation of the world, which can be given correctly only by a coöperation of all the faculties with which we are endowed. I limit myself, now, to this simple observation: we must follow out this view, and attack pantheism upon this side, would we refute it.

Such, gentlemen, — and I must ask your indulgence for it, — is the only refutation which the plan of this course will permit me to present of pantheism. When I come to systems which have drawn from the analysis of the moral facts of our nature, opinions destroying or altering the true idea of ethical science, I shall refute them at full length; for they are, truly, systems of ethics, and, in a course having ethics for its object, they must be thus examined and refuted; but in relation to systems, which, like this now discussed, destroy ethical science, by opinions foreign from the moral facts of our nature, I must be more brief. If it was my plan to refute these doctrines in a manner at all proportioned to their importance, there is no one to which I should devote more time than to this of pantheism; but this would destroy the proper plan of my present course, and prolong, indefinitely, your attendance. I can only, therefore, in regard to such systems, point out to you the moral consequences which they imply; and, then, having disengaged clearly the fundamental idea on which they are based, limit myself to an exposure of the radical error of the idea, and to a specification of the precise particulars in which it is at variance with the actual condition of things. Within these limits I have confined all my observations upon the systems of mysticism and necessity, and within the same limits I have felt bound to comprise the discussion of pantheism.

I cannot close this lecture, gentlemen, without apologizing for having detained you so long upon such subtle ideas as these of which Spinoza's system is composed; but so much is said of this system, and it

is so often cited by those who have never even opened the works of this great metaphysician, that I have been glad to avail myself of the opportunity of giving some idea of it to those who attend this course. You will see, even from this succinct description, complex and difficult of comprehension as it has been, how guilty he must be of levity, who appeals to Spinoza, on all occasions, with an air of confidence. For myself, I declare I know no labor so difficult in metaphysical study, as to form a precise idea of the system exhibited in the ethics of Spinoza; and, if I should be asked to give a detailed and complete exposition of this system, I should require not a few lectures, but a course of six months.



## LECTURE VIII.

## SYSTEM OF SKEPTICISM.

GENTLEMEN,

IN the two preceding lectures it has been my desire, first, to exhibit the system of pantheism under the form in which it was presented by Spinoza, and then, putting aside the peculiarities of this form, to disengage the essential and fundamental principles of the system; and I have attempted thus to show the manner in which these principles sap the foundations of morality, and the radical error which justifies all sound philosophy in rejecting them. I have now done with pantheism; and in this lecture I proceed, therefore, at once to the system of skepticism, the fourth and last that I proposed to examine.

It is not in the nature of European nations to slight real being, and to substitute for it the pure conceptions of reason, or the chimerical visions of imagination; for they are endowed in general with a spirit that is practical, exact, and observing. Not so with the nations of the East. Opposite dispositions incline them rather to mysticism and pantheism. Skepticism has, therefore, occupied, in the progress of European philosophy, since its birth in Greece to

the present time, a far larger space than pantheism; and, while few adherents only have been added to the latter, skeptics have been innumerable. Again, there is but one way for becoming a pantheist, but a thousand for becoming a skeptic. The certainty of human knowledge may be attacked in a thousand different ways; and, satisfied with the one that we have followed, we may suppose ourselves victorious, and become skeptics. For these two reasons, a complete exposition of the foundations of skepticism, as they have been exhibited during the two thousand years of European philosophy, is far from being an easy undertaking, and would require a much more detailed discussion than I have given to the system of pantheism. But I will endeavor, in the present lecture, to consider, in a rapid and concise manner, not, indeed, all the arguments of skeptics against the certainty of human knowledge, but still the main principles upon which those arguments rest. I invite, therefore, your closest attention.

Human knowledge is something intermediate, between the mind that knows and the thing known; or, in other words, it is the representation, the image of real being in the intellect. Three elements, then, are to be distinguished in the phenomenon of knowledge — the subject of knowledge, that is to say, the intellect acquiring it; the object of knowledge, that is, the real being represented; and lastly, the knowledge itself, or the representation in the intellect of the real being. This being premised, knowledge is true, if it is a faithful image of the object; it is false, if it is an unfaithful one.

The efforts of those, therefore, who desire to prove that we know nothing with certainty, must be directed wholly to the point of showing that human knowledge is not a faithful representation of its object; and those who wish to maintain the certainty of human knowledge must prove the contrary.

Such is the battle-field, where skepticism and dogmatism contend. The controversy between them reduces itself to this question — Is human knowledge, or is it not, a faithful image of real being? And, as in every act of knowing there are three elements, — the knowledge itself, the subject attaining it, and the object represented, — skeptical systems pretend to prove, by an analysis of human knowledge, of the real being represented, and of the intellect, that it is impossible to answer the question in the affirmative.

The nature of knowledge, the nature of the object of knowledge, and the nature of the subject of knowledge, are the three sources whence all arguments of skepticism must necessarily and do actually proceed. You will see how all these arguments fall successively under one of these three great heads. I shall limit myself to the principal ones, and will begin with those which are drawn from the nature of knowledge itself.

The first defect to be observed in human knowledge is its incompleteness; and this is a defect which cannot be denied. No one has ever had the boldness to assert, that man is capable of arriving at complete knowledge; it is evidently impossible; it is an achievement to which humanity has never had the presumption to aspire. Yet more; we acknowledge at once that even such knowledge as we are competent to gain,

is but small in comparison with our ignorance. Our knowledge, therefore, must be incomplete.

Now, if human knowledge is necessarily incomplete, and so very incomplete, what faith can we repose in it? That any element of knowledge may be perfectly conceived and comprehended, is it not necessary that all other elements of knowledge should be present also to the intellect? Each portion of real being has relations to every other portion; and, if we are ignorant of these, and of the relations connecting them with what we do know, then even this knowledge must be imperfect, and, consequently, not to be depended on. Thus, from the consideration that human knowledge is incomplete, comes the first argument against the faith which we blindly repose in it.

But let us forget, for a time, this imperfection of our knowledge, and consider its characteristics. And what do we see? We see that this incomplete knowledge has no durability nor permanence. On the very same question, the human mind in successive ages passes from one opinion to another, and never attaches itself firmly to any. This mutability of human opinion is displayed in the history of every nation. That which we call the life of a nation is nothing more than the perpetual transformations of its ideas upon the most important subjects. This mutability, however, goes yet further; it reaches to individuals as well as to nations, and the human race: however short life may be,—however rapid the passage of man across this earthly scene, from infancy to youth, from youth to mature years, from maturity to old age, from year to year, from month to month,

from week to week, — his opinions alter and are modified or changed on every point; so that there is mutability in individuals as well as in communities, and in communities as well as in the race.

This is not all, gentlemen; this mutability of human opinions in time becomes, if I may say so, diversity in space. Take the human race, in any given age, and consider it in the different nations which compose it, and you will find, among these different nations, the greatest diversity of opinions upon the most important points. You will see that Americans do not think about them like Europeans, nor Europeans like Asiatics. You will see that neighboring nations, divided only by a river, a mountain, or an imaginary line, profess wholly different opinions upon the same points; and this diversity you will find in the bosom of each nation, throughout every family, whose members will differ one from another. And these opinions, which succeed each other in time, or coëxist in space, are distinguished not only by faint shades of difference from each other, but often the diversity approaches absolute contradiction. Hence the faith of one place or age is precisely opposite to that of another age or place. And the same questions about real being are forever agitated anew.

If human knowledge, in its natural development, presents to the observer such a spectacle, what follows? Does it not follow, that this very real being, which is the object of knowledge, — and which knowledge, to be true, must faithfully represent, — offers different or contradictory appearances to human intelligence, ac-

cording to times, places, circumstances, and individuals? To which, now, of these impressions and representations, shall I give the name of truth? To which shall I trust? Shall I believe in the opinions of the Greeks and Romans, or in those of our own times? Shall I prefer our own opinions to those of the Chinese, or those of the Chinese to those of the American Indians? Are not all these opinions equally human knowledge? Do they not equally exist in human intelligence? On what ground shall I prefer one to another? For what reason shall I put faith in one, and refuse it to all others? There is evidently no legitimate ground for choice; and yet I can believe in them only on such a condition. I ought not, then, to believe at all; for I have no right to believe.

Let us pass now from the spectacle offered by human knowledge itself, to the object of knowledge, and the motives for doubt will appear equally strong.

The object of knowledge, or real being, is made up, partly of that which is within the reach of observation, and partly of that which is beyond it. The surface only reveals itself; the depths are hidden.

There are, therefore, if I may say so, two elements of the object of knowledge—the apparent element and the hidden element—the surface and the depths,—qualities and effects on the one side, substance and causes on the other.

Now, of these two elements, the one actually within our reach is, of all things in the world, most mutable. You know what modifications and transformations all bodies, all beings, animate and inanimate, which people the vast creation, perpetually undergo. There

is not a body that is not incessantly subjected to the action of a thousand different causes, which, from moment to moment, from week to week, from month to month, from year to year, alter, change, transform it, and leave it not one instant the same. The surface of objects, then, with which we are acquainted, is not a stable and permanent object. Far from it, gentlemen; it is something forever fluctuating and never abiding; it is the successive waves of a passing stream; a fugitive appearance, replaced each moment by others, which, in turn, give place to others which succeed. What, now, can the knowledge given by observation represent, except some one of these ephemeral appearances? To-morrow, an hour, or a minute hence, this knowledge will represent what has already passed away, and no longer exists. The notions which we have acquired and laid up in our minds, then, are faithful and true only for the moment when they are first received; the next moment they have ceased to be so, for that of which they were the type has already gone, and something else supplies its place.

If this is true of our knowledge of surfaces presented to the eye, what can our knowledge be of the depths of being which are hidden? We can explain the acquisition of this latter kind of knowledge only in one of two ways; either we infer it from the knowledge of the surface, or our reason conceives it *à priori*. If we admit that it is in the former mode, then, I ask, is the induction from the variable to the constant, from the accessory to the principal, a legitimate one? The portion of real being observed is not only

the smaller portion, but it is the least important, and is essentially secondary. What are qualities when compared with substance, or effects when compared with causes? What is the finite, the transient, the variable, when compared with the infinite, the durable, the immutable? Evidently, the premises on which we reason cannot support, or make legitimate, the conclusions which, it is pretended, we can deduce from them. But have we even these premises themselves? Have we not just seen that we neither have, nor can have, any true knowledge of the surfaces of things; and, that such knowledge as we think we have, neither does nor can represent any thing, except for the moment when it is received? Were the pretended premises, then, sufficient to sustain our reasoning, it might still be said, with truth, that we had no such premises.

If, on the other hand, we conceive *à priori* of that portion of real being, which is beyond observation, what authority have we for such a conception? What else is this but a divination, a presumption, the exactness and authority of which we cannot prove? When my reason conceives necessarily of what my observation cannot reach,—when it forms an idea which it cannot but form, a necessary, an irresistible idea,—I immediately conclude, it is true, that this idea does faithfully represent real being; but where are the demonstrative proof and authority for this? Singular reasoning, indeed, which determines the truth of an idea from its necessity, from the blind instinct producing it! Be it, then, that human intelligence does



draw conclusions as to the depths of being, from its surface,—be it that it does form conceptions of it *a priori*,—it is still impossible to establish, in any thorough manner, the certainty of such knowledge. And, since the knowledge representing the surface of things, and derived immediately from observation, is liable to no less weighty objections, it follows, from a careful analysis of the *object* of knowledge, that, so far from being led to any convincing proof that human knowledge is true, we seem to be furnished with a thousand reasons for thinking that it is not true, and that it cannot and ought not to be trusted.

But, gentlemen, such objections as these are slight, are nothing, in comparison with others which skepticism has drawn from the very nature of human intelligence itself, or, in other words, from the *subject* of knowledge.

We have just seen, in analyzing the *object* of knowledge, that it is not fixed, but essentially mutable and variable. The same may be said, and with yet more reason, of the *subject* of knowledge, that is, of man himself. When we consider man only as to his corporeal frame, a perpetual transformation, like that which we observe in all things else, is equally observable in him. The human body remains for no two successive moments identically the same; the particles composing it are every moment giving place to others; and yet this body, which is forever thus incessantly renewing itself, is the instrument used in acquiring knowledge; as it changes, the apparatus of the senses

change; and, if the senses alter, our knowledge must be affected, even if the intellect itself remains immutable.

But yet more, a crowd of circumstances, a multitude of various influences, tend, in addition to the body, to modify our knowledge. Man is changed by years; he is neither intellectually nor physically the same when old, as when young, when mature, as when a child; he is changed, and his faculty of intelligence, also, by sickness and by health: that a sick man sees nothing as a well man does, every one knows; and between these two extreme states there is an infinite number of intermediate bodily states, each producing analogous states of mind, which, by coloring every object with varying hues, introduce new changes in our knowledge. How shall we choose, with any degree of certainty, between ideas received during sleep, and when we are awake? Are not the faculties acting when we are asleep, the same which we employ when awake? And, if the same, have they not the same authority? And what a difference, too, do we find between impressions of real being, received at different times! Of two images of the same thing, shall reason prefer one, and reject the other? If there is any sure, unquestionable criterion, let us know what it is. Such a criterion can be no more found, than one authorizing us to prefer the knowledge of a man, who has retained his reason, to that of one who has lost it. For, in such a case, what do I see? Only two different states of the same human intelligence. And, I ask, on what ground am I justified in declaring, or by what signs

can I determine that the ideas acquired in the one case are true, and in the other false? The only objection that can be brought against the insane man is, that he sees things differently from the great body of mankind. But a majority is no criterion of the truth; and no more will this criterion avail to determine between the ideas of sleep and waking.

Independently of these causes of change, which by modifying the subject modify our knowledge, there are many others, affecting, in a no less evident manner, all our ideas and opinions. For instance, does not education determine, or at least contribute much towards determining, our ideas, upon the most important matters? Do we not receive these ideas ready made from the persons who surround us in infancy, and from all who may accidentally compose our family? And what shall we say of that education, more powerful and extensive than that of family, to which we are all subjected, and which influences us in spite of ourselves, and without our knowing it, the education of the religion, laws, institutions, customs, prejudices, and manners of our country,—in a word, of all circumstances contributing to form the intellectual atmosphere under which our intelligence is developed? Must not all these causes modify prodigiously, and in a thousand different ways, human ideas, without any change in real being? And now, if we add the influence of the passions, and of interest, upon our judgment, of rank and profession, of physical conformation, and of character, of climate, food, and a thousand other causes, we shall find that their influence is equally various and great. These infinite diversities in our ideas of real being are not produced by

real being itself; it is not real being that introduces the different ideas, notions, judgments of the fool and of the sage, of the sick and of the well, of the child and of the aged, of the idolater and of the Christian, of the Chinese and of the European, upon the same subjects, where real being is the same for all. This difference of ideas is owing to the mutability of the subject itself. And how, then, can we trust to the truth and fidelity of these ideas?

In order that knowledge may be faithful, is it not a necessary condition, that it should be the pure result of the impression of real being upon the intellect? Human intellect should therefore be a calm, clear mirror, in which the image of the reality may be reflected. But if the mirror is subject to the action of a thousand causes which modify it, and thus alter the image, supplying its place by thousands having no resemblance to the reality, what confidence can we feel in these images? And even when one is faithful, how can it be separated and distinguished?

But we must go yet further; we must analyze the operation of the various faculties of this intellect, which we have thus far examined as a whole, and see if they act separately in so regular a manner as to authorize us to place confidence in such results as they may give. And to begin with the senses; we all know that they do often deceive us; no philosopher has ever disputed it. No one doubts that each sense gives, at different times, different representations of the same object, and that the different senses contradict one another. The various elements of our faculty of intelligence, therefore, contradict each other, and contradict

themselves. What confidence, then, can we feel in it, and to which of its opposing testimonies shall we trust? And again, who can assure us that the eye sees, or that the ear hears, or that the touch feels, in one individual as it does in another? That which is yellow to me, may be blue to another, to another red, to another black. And how can I determine whether this is the case or not? These names signify only that to each person the same objects appear constantly of the same color, but by no means that all who use the same word have a sensation of the same color. We should still agree in the language used, even if what I saw as yellow should be red to you. The senses may be, therefore, faculties quite peculiar in each individual, and may give wholly different reports to different men; and yet it is upon their testimony that the greater part of knowledge derived from observation must rest.

Our immediate knowledge, derived from the second source, reason, is based on no better authority. I have already said, gentlemen, that reason does not believe in any thing from a perception of it, as observation does, but from a judgment that it ought to be, and because she cannot conceive of its not being. But is this a proof that what she believes in really does exist? What, because my reason cannot but admit the existence of something, does it follow that it really has existence? Will a proposition express a universal law of real being, simply because my intellect feels itself forced by a blind necessity, and without proof, to admit it? This is the only and sole motive for believing in the truth of the *a priori* principles of our reason; for that they do not prove themselves, all philosophers agree in acknowl-

edging. But what is such belief as this, except an act of blind and instinctive faith? What else is it except believing without proof, that is to say, without reason for believing? This would be true, even if men were agreed as to the number and nature of the principles which we are obliged to believe in thus blindly. But no such agreement is to be found in the system of philosophers. The list of these principles given by Aristotle, is not the list given by Kant; and Kant's differs from that of any other philosopher. It is enlarged or reduced arbitrarily. In one list are elements not found in another; and yet worse, even those may be disputed which are found in all. Many have been rejected, for strong reasons, by different philosophers. Hume, for instance, has dissected the principle of causality, seemingly so evident a one, and, in the judgment of many, has succeeded in showing that it has no sound foundation, but is a simple illusion of the human mind. Condillac has done the same with the principle of substance, by virtue of which we believe that there can be no such thing as whiteness, without something that is white. The substance of bodies, according to this philosopher, is nothing more than the aggregate of the qualities of bodies. Some have denied the existence of space, others that of duration; so that, admitting the fact of this blind faith, on which they are founded, the *a priori* principles of reason are still open to controversy and denial.

Thus much of the two faculties, which are the sources of our immediate knowledge. And now it may be added that the intellectual processes, going on within

us in relation to the information thus given, will bear critical examination no better.

These processes may be all described by the one word *reasoning*. Observation having supplied us with certain representations of real being, and reason having furnished us with what appear to be necessary principles, intellect is capable of only the one act of arranging this knowledge, and of drawing conclusions from these premises, that is, of reasoning. If we add to these premises the consequences deduced from them by reasoning, we have the whole of human knowledge.

And since it has been shown that observation and reason give us nothing upon which we can surely depend, it follows that the conclusions drawn by reasoning from such uncertain and fluctuating information must have the same characteristics, and be uncertain and fluctuating too. But the very reasoning itself, even if we should suppose the information given to be sure and fixed, — the very reasoning itself is a fallible and variable instrument for acquiring knowledge. You well know that, as a matter of fact, there are constantly great mistakes in reasoning, and that it is thus proved that the faculty of reasoning is not infallible ; for, if you give the same premises to two persons, you know it is possible that they will deduce from them, though they are identical, diametrically opposite conclusions. Nothing is easier, as people of all times, ancient and modern, have acknowledged, than to find arguments of seeming equal strength for or against any given proposition. Carneades, and the sophists before him, and advocates all over the world since, have succeeded perfectly in this

game, which would be impossible, if reasoning was not a deceptive instrument.

This sad view of our faculties, gentlemen, is disheartening enough; and yet I must not omit the consideration of memory, playing, as it does, so important a part in our acquisition of knowledge.

Memory lends its aid in all the operations of our minds, and performs an important part both in observation and in reasoning; as both of these proceed by successive steps. If memory, then, is fallible, and its communications uncertain, the authority of all our knowledge must be destroyed at once. What, then, is memory? It is the faculty which represents the past. Who now is ignorant, in the first place, that memory differs exceedingly in different persons? In some it is more, in others less, complete and sure. Even if memory, therefore, is incapable of altering the elements of the past, that is, of deceiving, yet this single fact of its greater or less degree of completeness, is sufficient to invalidate the truth of all the intellectual results, which it aids in producing. But who can satisfy us that memory cannot deceive? Does it not often happen that it represents the past quite otherwise than as it actually was, and as we know it to have been? And if it is said, that this is because it confounds and mistakes, not because it deceives, it may yet be asked, whether the result is not the same in the one case as in the other, and whether a mistake does not equally with a falsehood lead us to believe what is opposite to the truth; without adding the consideration, that the only guaranty we can at any time have of the veracity of memory, is the blind faith that we repose in it.



If, now, to all these reasons for doubt in the certainty of our knowledge, originating from the fallibility of the very faculties which communicate it, we add such accessory causes as tend to introduce new elements of error into their action; if we take also into view the illusions, imaginations, and prejudices of all kinds which are sown so thickly and spring up so rankly in the mind, and all the various passions of our nature, creating, as they do, so many predispositions and predilections, will there not result from such a host of reasons for doubt, apparent on all sides, and mutually supporting each other, a complete demonstration of the uncertainty of human knowledge?

But supposing that what we have thus far said is without foundation; supposing that our faculties are not subject to variation and error; that they never contradict themselves, and are perfectly in harmony with each other; that they never give opposing testimony; that our passions and imagination never confuse our reasonings and mental vision, — let all this be true, and yet the supporters of the certainty of human knowledge have not advanced one step.

For, gentlemen, there is a skepticism yet deeper than this which we have now been considering, and which, as we have seen, grows up from such strong and multiplied considerations. There is a skepticism which doubts of human intelligence itself, even when admitted to be a faculty consistent with itself, and free from contradictions; even when admitted to be, as we say, infallible.

If all men, in all epochs of society, should arrive at the same ideas on the same subjects; if each man, at different periods of life, and in different circumstances,

should obtain always the same results, when applying his faculties to a consideration of the same questions; if all the people of any one country, or of all nations on the face of the earth, should agree entirely and unanimously in their sentiments and opinions, upon every subject whatsoever, — even if this should be the case, what, then, would follow? What more would all this be, than simply the testimony of human intelligence in regard to real being? Well! how do we know that human intelligence is not so constituted, as to see things quite otherwise than as they actually are? How do we know that it is not so organized as to see as square that which is truly round, and as yellow that which is truly red, or as good that which is bad, and as true that which is false? Had God willed, as he might have done, so to organize our intelligence, that the image given by it of real being should be an untrue one, like that which water, when agitated, gives of objects reflected from its surface, it would have been enough, gentlemen; by this simple hypothesis, the certainty of all human knowledge is utterly and irretrievably destroyed. To this final objection of skepticism there can be no possible answer, because such an answer would suppose a faculty in man enabling him to judge between his own intelligence and real being; but this is in itself inconceivable; and even if it were not so, the supposition would avail nothing, for this new faculty would at once become liable to the very objection which it had been summoned to remove.

From this rapid sketch of the various objections which skepticism has brought against the truth of human knowledge, you will see that they all originate

from a consideration of human knowledge in itself, or of the nature of the object and subject of this knowledge. Mutable and unstable as are its object on one side, and its subject on the other, knowledge cannot in itself be either fixed or trustworthy; not fixed, because its object alters, as soon as knowledge is obtained; and not trustworthy, because no true image of the reality can be reflected in so unstable a mirror; and even were this not the case, even were the intellect and the object of knowledge equally immutable, it would yet remain a question, whether the intellect is fitted to give a true representation of real being. All considerations tend, therefore, to this same conclusion, that there is no ground for confidence in human knowledge.

What, now, is the immediate consequence of such opinions? This, gentlemen; that nothing can give us assurance of the fact, that what we consider good is really good, or that what we consider bad is really bad, or that what we consider obligatory is really obligatory, or that really forbidden which we think forbidden. No consequence could follow more immediately or evidently from a principle. Skepticism destroys at once, therefore, all morality and all right. For a skeptic, moral truth exists no more than mathematical or physical truth; all truth vanishes at once, if every means of distinguishing it from error is proved to be of no avail.

But, admitting the consequence to be just, one thing yet remains for the skeptic to explain; and that is, the existence of those ideas of good and evil, of justice and injustice, which are found in human minds. And skeptics have explained the existence of these

ideas in a variety of ways which do not contradict their system.

Skeptics, in ancient times, considered all such ideas as the invention of legislators, intended to sustain the weakness of the laws which they enacted, and to restrain those who had no fear of threatened penalties. The greatest skeptic of modern times, Hume, asserts that they are the result of an inward sense, which, brought into relation with human actions, is agreeably affected by some, and disagreeably by others, as taste or smell is by flavors and scents. It is on account of these agreeable or disagreeable impressions that we apply to actions the qualities of good or bad, and love the one while we dislike the other, and prefer the former to the latter. It is evident that this explanation does no more to establish moral obligation than that of antiquity did, and that it is equally in harmony with all the consequences of skepticism. There was not a skeptic of ancient times who failed to draw from the system such moral consequences as I have described. Archelaus, the sophists Aristippus, Arcesilaus, Pyrrho, Carneades, Sextus Empiricus, all professed that there is no sure distinction between good and evil; that good and evil are altogether the effects of legislation; and that their character is determined by the greatest interest of the legislator and of society.

This *consequence*, inevitable as it is in the view of reason, has, then, been fully admitted in all time. And more than one skeptic of antiquity appears to have united practice to theory; at least, there are some evidences that such was the fact. Incredible stories, for instance, are told of Pyrrho's complete indifference

to the distinctions between good and evil; and as he extended this indifference to all other subjects, it was not in him a want of morality so much as a logical adherence to his principles. In other skeptical schools, morality has been resolved into pleasure, and by a process quite simple and natural. For although there is no truth or error for the skeptic, there are yet agreeable and painful sensations; and for want of the higher good, which he has lost sight of, he adopts the greatest gratification that sensibility enables him to enjoy.

## LECTURE IX.

## REFUTATION OF SKEPTICISM

GENTLEMEN,

IN my last lecture, I had two objects in view ; first, to make you acquainted with the foundation on which skepticism is based ; and secondly, to show you that this system, in destroying all faith, destroys, also, moral obligation, the very foundation of ethics. There remains one further duty to fulfil ; for I must not pass by the system of skepticism without pointing out its radical errors. The refutation, however, must be as rapid as the exposition. It might be developed indefinitely. I shall not attempt to examine, separately, the various grounds for doubt proposed by skeptics ; but will limit myself to the statement of such general views as may be used in their refutation. And as the subject is one of a complex and subtile nature, I beg you to give me your strict attention.

I have told you that skeptics draw their arguments for doubt either from the nature of human knowledge, of the subject which knows, or of the object known. Every skeptical objection may be ranged under one of these three categories. Of the three classes of objections, those arising from the nature of the subject are

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without comparison the most grave; indeed they are the only ones which are truly unanswerable; and with these, therefore, I will begin.

But, in order that the nature, weakness, and error of these objections may be comprehended, it is indispensable that you should have a clear idea of the part performed by intellect, in the acquisition of knowledge. Without this you will be unable, except in a very imperfect degree, to feel the force of the objections of the skeptic, or of such explanations as I shall give. I will first, therefore, describe in a few words the process by which our knowledge is acquired, and the faculties employed, and will hastily lay bare the mechanism of the wonderful operations from which human knowledge results. And I trust that my exposition will be intelligible and clear.

However numerous and various the kinds of human knowledge may appear to be, they are all to be referred to two classes of notions, the one elementary, and communicated immediately, the other secondary, and derived from the first. We recognize, also, two orders of faculties; the former of which acquire directly a knowledge of the reality, and form those notions which I call elementary; while the latter, acting upon the elementary notions already acquired, deduce from them our secondary knowledge.

Our elementary notions are all derived from two sources — observation and reason.

As you well know, gentlemen, the whole of real being is not exhibited to us, but only that small portion with which we are brought directly in contact. We have a faculty fitted to acquire a knowledge of this.

It is the faculty of observation; and we are accustomed to call the knowledge obtained from it empirical. These notions represent only what we have observed; that is, only a portion, and a very small portion, of what actually is. They form the first class of the elementary notions of human intelligence; and I shall have said all that it is necessary you should bear in mind, in asking you to remember, that observation can be applied in two different directions—outwardly by the senses, inwardly by consciousness; so that all the knowledge which we can obtain through observation is reduced to that perceived out of ourselves by the senses, or within ourselves by consciousness.

But these are not the only sources of our direct information as to real being. Independently of observation, we have another faculty that communicates knowledge. This faculty is reason, which does not, like observation, see what actually is, but conceives, from what observation has communicated, of that which must and cannot but be. Hence a second class of elementary notions, called indifferently *conceptions of the reason, rational truths, à priori principles*, whose characteristic is, that they express something which cannot but be, which consequently is in harmony with the whole of real being, and represents universal notions; while, on the other hand, empirical notions represent only the portion of real being subject to observation, correspond and refer only to that portion, and never, therefore, go beyond a certain degree of generality.

Such are the two classes of our elementary notions. They include all the materials of human knowledge.



And there is not, and cannot be, in human intelligence, any elementary notion which is not derived either from observation of what actually is, by the senses and consciousness, or from the conceptions of what must be, by the reason.

And here an important remark should be made — it is, that reason never rises to the ideas which it is her function to introduce into human knowledge, unless the communications of observation first supply the occasion. Thus, to give an example, it is absolutely necessary that observation should meet with something which has just begun to be, in the portion of real being open to its view, before reason can attain to the absolute idea that there must be a cause for whatever begins to exist. It is only after unconsciously, and in a thousand particular cases, applying this universal idea, which is secretly contained within it, that reason suddenly disengages it, and conceives it under its universal form. We say, a thousand times, when observing something that has just begun to exist, "This has a cause," before we rise to the conception of the absolute and necessary idea implied by the expression, that is to say, to the conception of the principle of causality in itself; so that, although these universal ideas are not derived from what observation gives us, yet, nevertheless, they do not arise without the communications of observation. Observation lends her aid, therefore, if I may say so, at the birth of the universal and absolute conceptions of reason.

On the other hand, reason operates in every acquisition of observation. Whatever the element of real being which observation meets with, whether external

or internal, there is always superadded to the simple notion it acquires, a supplementary idea from the reason. Thus, when observation perceives a quality, intellect could not form the judgment, "This is white, this is red," unless beyond the mere quality reason conceived of something to which observation cannot attain, namely, substance. Thus, again, when observation has communicated the notions of any two facts, we could not judge that they were successive to each other, unless reason added to the mere notion of these two facts an idea of something more, beyond the reach of observation; that is, of duration, which alone makes succession possible, and the idea of which is consequently implied in that of succession. Again, when, in view of any object we pronounce that simplest of all judgments, "*This is*," it is because reason superadds to the simple notion of the object, supplied by observation, the idea that observation does not deceive us, and consequently that external reality is conformed to the internal idea which observation has communicated; so that we may say, with equal truth, that observation is the occasion of every conception of the reason, and yet that no notion of observation can become a judgment, or become knowledge, without the coöperation of an *à priori* element which reason supplies. But enough of this coöperation of these two faculties in the acquisition of all human knowledge; all that it is important we should bear in mind is, that our elementary knowledge is derived exclusively from these two sources.

Thus, then, gentlemen, are obtained the materials of all our ideas. And now another faculty begins to act, which works up these materials, and deduces from them

our ulterior knowledge. This faculty is reasoning; and we must distinguish between reasoning by induction and by deduction; for reasoning has two modes of proceeding.

This is the process of reasoning by induction: when several particular cases, which are analogous, have been ascertained by observation, and stored in the memory, reason applies to this series of analogous observations the *à priori* principle, that the laws of nature are constant; and, at once, what was true through observation in only twenty, thirty, or forty observed cases, becomes, by the application of this principle, a general law, as true of other cases not observed as of those which observation has ascertained. From the results of observation, and solely by the application to these results of a conception of reason, the mind arrives at a consequence that transcends them. Such is the method of reasoning by induction. Its characteristic is, that it proceeds from certain results, communicated by observation, to a general principle within which they are included.

The process of reasoning by deduction is as follows: a truth of any kind, particular, general, or universal, being made known, reason deduces from it whatever other truths it includes; sometimes the deduction is complete, in which case reason only presents the whole truth under two different aspects; at other times the deduction is imperfect, and then reason passes from the whole to a part. But in either case, if we compare together the results of our reasoning and the premises from which we drew them, we shall always find that these results, and a part or the whole of the premises

are perfectly equivalent. This is the special characteristic of deductive reasoning.

Such, gentlemen, are the important transformations to which intellect subjects the primary notions immediately communicated by observation and reason. There are two faculties by which we acquire our elementary notions—observation and reason; and two modes of reasoning by which these elementary notions are converted into ultimate notions—induction and deduction.

One other faculty coöperates in the formation of human knowledge. It is the faculty that preserves and makes durable the notions acquired; I mean memory. Without this faculty, human knowledge would be forever limited to the present moment. Memory treasures up the successive results of observation, and thence comes experience. Memory is interwoven, indeed, with the texture of all reasoning; for we could never arrive at a conclusion, without remembering at each step both the premises from which we set out, and the intermediate steps already taken. Memory enters, therefore, as a necessary auxiliary, into the formation of all the notions derived from observation or reasoning, and it alone preserves these notions. Not so, however, with ideas supplied by reason. In their acquisition memory has no part, because they are formed spontaneously. Neither does it aid in keeping them, for this is not needed. As reason acquires these ideas because it is impossible not to conceive them, this necessity continues to be felt, and reason conceives them anew, whenever they are required in the process of obtaining knowledge:

there is no need of the employment of memory, therefore, to preserve them. Reason alone, of all our faculties, is independent of memory, and demands not her aid.

Such, omitting innumerable details, are the positive results, to which long study of the origin and formation of knowledge has led me. Such, in my view, is the whole process of intellectual creations; and it is, as you see, most simple.

Thus much having been explained, we are now in a situation to examine the grounds upon which the truth of human knowledge, thus acquired, is questioned, and those upon which it may securely rest. We are acquainted with the materials of this knowledge, and the mode in which its various elements are formed. We shall be able to see, therefore, the exact tendency and real force of objections urged against it.

And in the first place, gentlemen, when any one of the four faculties, which coöperate in the formation of our knowledge is brought into action, and communicates any notion, such as it is fitted to introduce, it is evident enough that we neither should nor could believe in the truth of this notion, except upon one condition — that we have faith in the natural veracity of this faculty, that is to say, in its ability to see things as they are; for if we have any doubt of this, it is evidently impossible that there should be any truth or belief at all for us. And yet there is not, and cannot be, any proof of this natural veracity of our faculties. When reason says, "This must be, of necessity," what proof have we that in reality it is so? We have absolutely none. When memory has a clear,

precise, undoubting recollection of having seen such a person in such a place, what proof have we that it represents the past as it really was? None, none whatever. When observation, directed attentively and steadily upon any object, says, "Here is something which is not round, but square, which is not white, but red, which has such or such a quality, and not some other one," what proves that our senses do not give representations different from the objects? Again I say, we have no proof. To torment ourselves in seeking to prove that the faculties through which we receive our notions are not so constituted as to give false, but true representations, is to torment ourselves most foolishly. For it is unquestionable, that any proof of this, such as can be imagined, must be the work of these very faculties, and consequently must be proved itself.

Thus, then, it appears that the principle of all certainty, and of all belief, must be, in the first instance, an act of blind faith in the natural veracity of our faculties. When a skeptic, therefore, says to a dogmatist, "You have no proof that your faculties see things as they are, no proof that God has not so constituted them as to deceive you," he says what is incontrovertible and undeniable. Such is the necessary condition of all faith. But let us for the moment put by this first general argument of skepticism, to which we will directly return, and let us see whether, as the skeptic pretends, it is still impossible to believe, even when we do not consider this chief ground of doubt. The skeptic asserts, as you will remember, that, even admitting that our faculties are so constituted as to see

things as they are, it is yet plain that there can be no confidence reposed in the information given by them, because each separate faculty is liable to be deceived, and there is no sure mode by which we can separate the truth from the error in its testimony.

We need not review the arguments by which the skeptic attempts to establish this point ; for they were considered at sufficient length in the preceding lecture. Let us now proceed to try the validity of these arguments. Have they really any force ? I think not.

The reasoning of the skeptic suggests at once this consideration, that, since all men acknowledge that their various faculties sometimes do deceive them, a means of distinguishing the cases in which they do and in which they do not is needed ; that is to say, each faculty must have its own *criterion* of truth, and we must be acquainted with this *criterion*. For, I repeat it, if there are no certain signs by means of which we can determine that our faculties do not deceive us, then neither can we know that they ever do deceive us, or even that they can deceive us.

But is that which is apparently true, really so ? Is there any *criterion* in fact ? I answer, yes, undoubtedly there is, for every man in his sound senses. There may be, and probably are, among my hearers, many who have never studied the rules for the direction of our faculties prescribed by logic ; but, I ask, does such a one, supposing that he is anxious and interested to gain certain information, doubt at all whether he is capable of seeing external objects as they really are ? And yet, who now will be bold enough to deny, that, in very many cases,

these very senses, by which we feel so sure of arriving at an accurate knowledge of external objects, do, in fact, lead us into error? Every one present believes, at this moment, both that his senses have often deceived him, and yet that they never would deceive him, if he took the proper precautions. We all, in fact, then, already do know, or, in times of need, do instinctively discover, these proper precautions; and this is saying, in other words, that we all have a *criterion*, by means of which we do distinguish the testimonies of our senses which merit confidence, from those which do not.

What I have here said of the senses may be said with equal truth of all our intellectual faculties. No one present doubts his capacity to discover the true consequences of any principle, when he is interested in so doing, and bestows upon it the proper attention and care. And yet, we all know that we can and do deceive ourselves in our processes of reasoning, though, at the same time, we believe that there are means by which we might avoid errors in reasoning. We all admit, therefore, that there is a *criterion*, by which we can separate truth from error in our reasonings.

And thus it is with all the faculties which coöperate in the production of our knowledge. All are able to distinguish between cases in which a faculty has been properly exercised, — and when, therefore, we may feel confidence in the results to which it leads us, — and those in which it has been improperly exercised, — when we can feel none, and when it is unreasonable to trust it.



And a yet further proof that we do actually possess such a *criterion*, is the fact, that we are applying it every moment. When, for instance, we see any object at a great distance, do we feel entire confidence in the impression received through the eye? We do not, and for this reason — that we have learned from experience that the eye distinguishes imperfectly, at a distance, both the form and the color of objects; but, at the same time, we know the means of satisfying ourselves whether the notion we have received is correct or not; we remove the opportunity for error by lessening the distance between our eye and the object. Analogous examples might be cited with regard to every faculty.

The cause of our faculties deceiving us is not the want of a *criterion* to distinguish the proper from the improper exercise of them, but carelessness or haste in not using or in misusing this *criterion*. We have a confused view of it, and do not use all proper precautions for arriving at the exact truth, except when we have great interests at stake. Philosophers have therefore spared no pains to describe precisely every *criterion*, which common sense sees indistinctly; and it is in this chiefly that the great discoveries, which have been made in logic, consist. The labors of Aristotle in this branch of philosophy all tended to the one point of determining the true *criterion* of reasoning by deduction; that is, the distinguishing sign of legitimate consequences. And what is this? It is that the consequence is one actually included in the premises. This result may seem very simple, and even trivial; but it was

only by a most laborious analysis of all forms and possible processes of reasoning, that this great man arrived at it. And again, what did Bacon accomplish in logic? He determined the true *criterion* of reasoning by induction, and this was all; though it cannot be said of him, as of Aristotle, that he left nothing to be completed by his successors; for, without question, the application of the inductive method, in the researches of two centuries, has wonderfully perfected Bacon's incomplete idea of the conditions necessary for the proper mode of proceeding in inductive reasoning. These two famous logicians derive their distinction, then, from the fact, that the one discovered the *criterion* for reasoning by deduction, and the other the *criterion* for reasoning by induction; and yet they did no more than make clear two indistinct ideas, which had always before existed in the common sense of men. The criterion of sensible perception and that of memory have also occupied philosophers. You are acquainted with the noble efforts of Malebranche, of Locke, and of the Scottish philosophers, to determine the laws of memory and of the association of ideas; and you cannot be ignorant of the care and sagacity with which so many philosophers have analyzed and determined the sources of error to which all our senses are exposed. Now, to what end have all these efforts tended, if not to the establishment of the precise conditions needed, in order that memory and the senses may communicate notions worthy of credit? Unquestionably, this end has, in a great measure, been attained; and, in regard to these two faculties, it may be truly said, that

logical science is very nearly perfect. And yet the only discovery made by logic, in relation to them, is a knowledge of those various means for correcting memory and sensation, which men naturally employ in all cases where they are deeply interested. So that philosophy has done no more in this matter than simply to make clear the notions which had always existed, though obscure, in common human intelligence.

So far, then, from its being true, as skeptics assert, that human intelligence, subject as its faculties are to error, has no means of distinguishing truth from error in the multitude of its impressions, — so far is this from being true, that we have proved that there are such means for correcting every faculty. We have proved it by showing, first, that all men know that their faculties do sometimes deceive them; secondly, that all men, when greatly interested, really discover and use proper precautions for arriving at true and certain results in the use of each and every faculty; and, thirdly, that the most distinguished logicians have actually determined the precise conditions required for such certainty.

You will have remarked that, among the examples adduced to illustrate the point which we have been considering, I have not drawn any from reason. My motive was, simply, that reason is not liable to be deceived; alone, of all our faculties, reason possesses this prerogative, and it is owing to its peculiarity of acting from necessity. Necessity cannot admit of the distinctions of more or less; and, provided only that it is constantly the same in all men, it

must produce similar effects in each individual, under similar circumstances. And to this it is owing, that the ideas of reason appear exactly the same, in number and in kind, in the minds of all human beings, and remain, through all changes, immutable.

Hence it is, gentlemen, that the objection has never been brought against reason, that it is different in different men, or in the same individual at different times: there is no such ground as this for rejecting its conceptions. On the contrary, the great argument of the skeptic against reason is drawn from the necessity and immutability of its judgments. "See," they say, "reason admits this or that, because it cannot but admit it; its motive for believing any thing is, that it is impossible to disbelieve it. Is not this a sufficient proof that its belief is imposed upon it by its nature, and that, had that nature been different, the belief would have been different also?" This, you will observe, is Kant's great argument: according to him, the conceptions of reason have only a subjective value, because they are necessary, and thus might change, if the subject itself was changed. This argument, however, is plainly the same with that which questions the veracity of our faculties; and, therefore, we pass it by for the present.

Since the variableness of its conceptions cannot be brought against reason, skepticism finds objections in the variableness of philosophical views of these conceptions, and has arrayed against its authority a twofold argument, drawn, first, from the systems which have denied or disfigured these conceptions; and, secondly, from the disagreements among them-

selves of the philosophers who have attempted to classify them.

It is entirely true, gentlemen, that some philosophers have rejected one or more of the principles of human reason, — as, for instance, Hume, who has denied, as I have shown you, the principle of causality, and Condillac, who has denied that of substance, and many others who might be added. But, you will remember, I have proved that Hume and Condillac could not but come to these conclusions, if they were consistent with their own systems. The objection, then, is without force. It is easy to bring forward philosophers, who have denied, in their writings, some one or other principle of reason ; but not one could be found, who has not, at the same time, constantly proved, by his conduct, that he believed in them quite as much as other men.

The objection drawn from the disagreement among philosophers, in their attempts to classify these principles, is equally weak. These principles are facts — the facts of human nature — and, of course, the observation of them is as liable to error as that of any other class of facts. Some of the philosophers who have studied them have seen more of these facts, others fewer — some more, others less correctly ; hence the diversity of results. The diversity will lessen and disappear in proportion as observations are multiplied and made more exact ; and, again, this diversity is more often apparent than real, and arises chiefly from the different forms under which the same identical principles have been described. But, however this may be, these diversities evidently

affect only the science of these principles, and not the principles themselves, which are and must remain identically the same for all minds. Where is the man, who, when he sees any thing happen, does not instantly suppose that there was a cause for it ; or, where he perceives a quality, does not conceive of a substance ; or who does not assign to every object a place, and to every event a time ? These notions are so essential to human nature, that not even madness can destroy or change them. The insane man has this in common with all mankind, that he still believes in these notions ; and, in this respect, still remains a man, even when he has ceased to be so in all others.

Thus much, gentlemen, I have thought it necessary to say of the general objection of skepticism, deduced from the variableness of the faculties of intelligence. As this charge cannot be brought against reason, which is immutable, it can extend only to observation, reasoning, and memory ; and I have shown, even if it is true that these are fallible, that we are still capable of distinguishing truth from error, in their communications. This objection against the certainty of human knowledge is thus shown to be without force ; and it is proved, therefore, that we can arrive at truth, if our faculties are only so organized as to see things as they really are, and not to transmit to us false images. Let us, then, return to the consideration of this last objection ; and, having thus driven skepticism behind its last intrenchment, let us try its strength.

I hasten to say, then, that I know no positive

answer to this objection of the skeptic: there can be no proof possible of the veracity of our intelligence. And yet this objection is a remarkable one, and deserves consideration.

In the first place, then, you will please to observe, that they even who are most swayed by this objection, pay no regard to it in practice. A philosopher may very well conceive that there is no proof that God has not so constituted his intelligence, as to see, instead of the reality, something quite different from it; and yet, whenever an object is presented to his eyes, he will believe in the fidelity of the impression received through them; or, if his memory suggests that he has promised to dine with a friend, he will go; or, if a threatening sound strikes his ear, he will avoid the danger. There never was a skeptic who escaped such inconsistencies, or who did not fall into them a thousand times each day; and, however strong his reasons for doubt, he will yet believe as firmly as the most determined dogmatist.

In the next place, please to consider whether there is any way in which an intelligent being could be organized so as to avoid this objection. If this being is to be intelligent, he must, of course, be capable of knowledge; and, that he may be capable of it, he must have faculties fitted to acquire knowledge. An intelligent being could be organized in no other way. Now, being rational, he will remark that he has faculties, and that these faculties form part of one individual organization, and that they are themselves individual; and, at once, this very objection of the skeptic arises, that, if they had been differently

constituted they might have given him very different notions of things. Indeed, so inherent is the possibility of such an objection, in the very nature of an intelligent being, that we cannot admit the thought that even the Deity himself is secure from it, except when we reflect that we can form no adequate idea of his nature; for, if we take the highest idea we can form, and represent to ourselves the Deity as an intelligent being, who acquires knowledge by the use of a faculty for knowing, we cannot, by any possibility, escape from the conclusion that he might experience this very doubt, urged by the skeptic against our faculties. Such observations may suffice to show, that, even if this objection cannot be refuted, it yet does not merit the serious consideration of a philosopher. We can know nothing, and can learn nothing, except by using the intelligent faculties with which we are endowed; the first truth, which any man who would learn and know, must recognize, is, that his faculties see things as they really are; for, otherwise, he must renounce all learning and knowledge; science becomes impossible, and research vain.

This is the only answer that can be made to the one irrefutable argument of skepticism.

As to the causes of error which are derived from the imagination, the passions, education, and prejudice, and from the desires and propensities of the body, they are all well known, and such as every man is aware he must guard against. The precautions, which must be taken in order that our faculties may be preserved from their influence, are recognized universally as conditions for the legitimate exercise of



our faculties, and, consequently, for the legitimacy of the knowledge acquired by them.

Independently, however, of these causes, which tend to disturb the regular exercise of our intelligence, it is said that the intelligent subject itself is variable; that it is modified by age, and changes from year to year, and from day to day; and that it is not from one moment to another the same. I reply, that we must make a distinction here. It is true, that our body, like all bodies whatever, does undergo perpetual alterations, and does each moment receive or lose something, and is not identically the same for two successive moments. Still the properties of its different organs remain the same, amidst this continual flux of the particles of which its substance is composed. But it is not the body that has the capacity of knowing, but the mind, or that which we call ourselves, our *me*. Now the *me* declares itself identically the same at every moment of existence; and, if any one should be inclined to deny this identity, he would immediately be conducted to such absurd consequences as must convince him that all the facts of human nature imply this absolute identity, and are inexplicable without it.

It is true, these very variations of our body exert an important influence upon the mind; but, then, they are classed among the causes of error, and every sensible man takes heed of them when he would acquire accurate knowledge. The young man is aware that his age is liable to passions which may mislead his judgment, and which incline him to a precipitancy and a self-confidence unfavorable to the

pursuit for truth; and we, on our part, in consulting the judgment of youth, take into consideration these sources of error, and estimate their influence.

I have now done with the skeptical objections deduced from the nature of the subject of knowledge; and I hasten to those which originate in the nature of the object of knowledge, and of knowledge itself.

I have but a word to say of the former. It is unquestionably true, that every external object is constantly varying. But, observe, it is not what is variable that interests us, or that is the object of science. It is the substance of beings which changes; but science seeks to become acquainted rather with their specific nature, which is permanent, and remains unchanged in all essential characteristics.

This is not saying that the nature of beings is incapable of change; but the change is a regular one. This change, in other words, is subject to laws, and it is these laws which science seeks to learn. This is true, not only of single beings, but of the whole creation; it remains the same, notwithstanding the eternal movement that agitates, and alters, and modifies, incessantly, all its parts — a movement regular, and subject to fixed and immutable laws. And it is this immutable form of the universe, and the immutable laws of life animating it, which science seeks to determine and know: these never change. Science is not interested in the unceasing flux of phenomena, forever passing throughout creation; for this is transient, and the transient is indifferent to her. Thus, even if the skeptic's objection is founded in truth, it still does not affect science, because it does

not extend to that which is really the object of science. And this is enough to show you the weakness of all skeptical arguments drawn from this main one.

Of objections brought against knowledge itself, the first consists in saying that the idea which knowledge gives us of the reality must be unworthy of confidence, because, when compared with its object, our knowledge is so very incomplete.

To this I reply, if it is true that our faculties, when legitimately and rightly used, do see things as they really are, it is, then, also true, that the knowledge communicated by them, is a faithful representation of whatever portion of real being they observe; and, therefore, the only charge which can be brought against our knowledge, is its incompleteness. If, indeed, we then proceed to draw from this fragment, of which we have acquired knowledge, rash inductions as to the whole of real being, we may easily fall into error; but the knowledge of the portion observed by our faculties will remain as true as before; and this only can be said, that we have reasoned badly, and drawn from certain premises conclusions which they did not contain. But it does not follow that we are incapable of reasoning correctly, because we can and do sometimes reason incorrectly. If we draw from the minute portion of real being which we are acquainted with, rigorous inductions only as to the whole, the notions arrived at will be exact. True, these notions will still remain incomplete; but the dogmatist nowise pretends that human knowledge is complete; he asserts only that it is faithful and trustworthy.

The second reason for doubt, found by the skeptic

in the nature of knowledge itself, is drawn from the consideration that human opinions are so different in different eras, places, nations, individuals. To give a thorough refutation of this objection would be an endless task. I must limit myself to a few rapid observations.

I remark, in the first place, that this diversity of opinion is far from extending to all subjects. If any one would undertake to draw up a counterpart to the picture presented by the skeptic, I am perfectly sure that the catalogue of opinions, held in common by all mankind, would form a far more large and valuable volume than the lists so often begun by skeptics of opinions upon which men differ. What would have become of the human race, indeed, if, upon points where it is important to have certain knowledge, opinions had been forever undetermined as to what is true or false. The truth is, human opinion has never hesitated nor altered in relation to those facts of the external world, or of human nature, and of their respective laws, which it is most important we should know. Do you ask why? Because the human race could have continued in existence on no other condition. And do you know that this part of human knowledge, representing the notions held in common by all mankind, of all and every age, is so very large, that the part representing those about which they differ, becomes, in comparison, imperceptible? Do you inquire, now, why this principal and most important part of knowledge is so little noticed, and why it plays so small a part on the theatre of philosophical discussions? It is because it is so essential to man, and so constantly employed by him,

that it becomes confounded with human nature itself; it is because we acquire it so early, and because we find it already formed and established in us when we first begin to reflect, and because, therefore, it appears to us as if we never had acquired it. It is that treasure, stored up for the future man, by the incredible activity of the young mind, in those first years, which, though to the careless observer they may seem a mere dream, are really the most fruitful in results of any in existence — a rare treasure, indeed, gentlemen; for it is with these ideas, common to every individual, that men understand themselves and each other; they constitute us men, and therefore is it that we do not notice them. The ideas which attract our attention are those upon which we differ. And how admirable is this provision! For to those alone which are uncertain need we direct our attention. Hence, however, comes the illusion, which leads us to consider these opinions as the whole of human knowledge, and which makes us believe, in consequence, that knowledge is uncertain; and this illusion must be kept distinctly in view, if we would estimate the true force of the skeptical argument.

But the diversity and mutability of human opinions, when thus limited, by no means lead to such consequences as skeptics pretend. They are to be explained by causes wholly different from that want of power in the intellect to see the truth, which the skeptic assigns as the reason.

The fallibility of intellect, gentlemen, is one cause. In every case there can be but one truth, while there may be numberless errors. It is, then, possible that

we may be deceived in a thousand ways about every thing; and, on the supposition that intellect is fallible, a thousand different errors—that is to say, different opinions—are possible; but does it follow, from this variety of opinions, that truth cannot be discovered? or, when once found, that it cannot be separated from the errors with which it is combined? Not at all; as a thousand instances testify. How many truths have been discovered and recognized, after countless false systems had been proposed and refuted! Who, indeed, would ever pursue a science at all, unless his studies tended to this result?

The laws which govern the acquisition of knowledge are another cause of the variety of opinions among men. God has not endowed us with the prerogative of attaining truth at once; we reach it only by a gradual progress, and successive steps—only by acquiring, in repeated efforts, its several elements. Human knowledge cannot be, and should not be, immutable. Each new discovery augments, and consequently modifies, science; and this is true at once of every department, and of the whole of knowledge. No opinion, no truth, then, is definitive, for it is not complete. And, since nations and individuals have advanced to different stages in this common progress towards truth, the diversity and mutability of human opinions are readily explained. Such an identity and perpetuity of human opinion, as is demanded by the skeptic, would be nothing less than the equality and immutability of all human intelligence.

In addition, it may be said that there is one other most fruitful source of illusion in this matter; and

it is, that the variety of forms in which ideas are expressed is often supposed to be a variety in the ideas themselves. Who does not know that the same religious or political dogmas are often found prevailing under forms the most apparently diverse? Who does not know, for example, how various are the modes by which the grand article of faith, a belief in a Deity, has been professed, in different ages and countries? Viewed in the light of this remark, this phantom of diversity in human opinion subsides into quite moderate dimensions.

Indeed, there is nothing at all wonderful in this variety of human opinions, if we consider the conditions to which intelligence is subject, and the laws of the formation, progress, and development of knowledge. In proportion as we more thoroughly understand the true laws of our faculties can we better explain the progress of the human mind, and the various errors through which it has passed. As soon as men discovered the true mode of proceeding in the investigation of physical science, it was at once seen most clearly why antiquity had erred, and necessarily erred. Hypothesis preceded observation in these pursuits, and various hypotheses were successively proposed and adopted, because it could not but be that such hypotheses should seduce the mind of man, and be tried; and the hypothetical method finally gave way to the method of observation, because the proper time for it had come. The change of human opinions in this respect was the necessary consequence of the laws of the human mind, and not a sign of its incapacity of arriving at truth.

I will close this lecture, already too much prolonged, with one more observation upon the system of skepticism. Is there, I ask, at the present day, any one, who refuses to believe in the truths which have been discovered in physical and mathematical science? If these truths are not doubtful, if they are worthy of credit, then it is plain that the faculties of human intelligence are capable of acquiring truth. They are not by nature deceptive, therefore, or incompetent to distinguish truth from error. If the authority of these faculties is acknowledged in one exercise of their power, then must it be acknowledged in all; and, if denied at all, in any case, then is all faith impossible. In other words, there can be no half-skepticism, nor half-dogmatism. He who would be a skeptic, in our day, must, if he would be consistent, consider mathematical and physical truths, as well as all others, chimerical. Skepticism, which once occupied so prominent a position in philosophy, has gradually withdrawn; and, from resting on those arguments so much used by antiquity, though now refuted, it finds itself driven, in modern times, to take refuge in the simple metaphysical doubt as to the veracity of our faculties — an impregnable position, it is true, but one where it does not and cannot exert any actual influence on the human mind.



## LECTURE X.

## THE SKEPTICISM OF THE PRESENT AGE

GENTLEMEN,

WE have now completed the discussion of systems which destroy the basis of morality by reasonings not drawn from the facts of human nature, and, according to my original plan, I propose to pass next to a second class of systems, which lead to the same result through an incomplete and false analysis of these facts. But, after what has been said in the two last lectures on the subject of skepticism, I have thought it might be useful for us to give some consideration to what may be called the *skepticism of the present age*. It is well thus to characterize it, because, as it is not in my view a form of genuine skepticism, this distinctive name may aid us in acquiring a correct and precise view of the actual moral condition of our era.

Skepticism, gentlemen, is a disposition in the mind to admit nothing as worthy of belief; a disposition produced by such a view of our means for acquiring truth as leads to the conclusion that we are incompetent to attain to any certain knowledge. Such is skepticism, strictly defined; and to such skepticism

I will give the name of *absolute skepticism*, to distinguish it from another state of mind also called *skepticism*, which differs from it entirely.

The state of mind to which I now refer may be seen in any person who is without a faith; and yet he may be wholly wanting in the characteristic of genuine skepticism, a determination to believe nothing, founded on the opinion that we have no means of arriving at certainty. A person may be without a faith, simply because he does not know what the truth is upon the great questions of human interest, and not at all because he admits in principle that the human mind is incapable of attaining to truth. Let us call this state of mind *actual skepticism*, to distinguish it from the disposition to believe nothing, which I have named *absolute skepticism*.

Keeping in mind this distinction, we shall see at once that the mass of mankind can never be *absolute skeptics*. They have not the information and leisure requisite for such an analysis of the phenomena of knowledge, as would lead to the conviction that the human mind is incapable of arriving at truth. The world has never yet seen, and for ages at least never will see, a whole people penetrated with such a conviction, and possessed by such a skepticism. But, on the other hand, *actual skepticism*, or a simple want of faith from mere ignorance of the truth upon important questions, may very easily prevail among the mass of a people; though even this, the only kind of skepticism to which they are liable, is always repugnant to them.

Among the various considerations from which absolute skepticism arises, there is but one that can to any

great degree be felt by a whole nation, and thus introduce into it the germ of genuine skepticism. This consideration is the contradictory and variable nature of human opinions. But it is only the better informed who are liable to be impressed even by this ; for to rise to a view of human opinion as contradictory and variable, must require such a degree of historical knowledge as can be possessed only by the more enlightened. The people, properly so called, are not competent to this. I add, now, that this truly skeptical view, the only one, as I have said, which can penetrate the heart of a people, is always a traditional and transmitted one, and never originates in the spontaneous action of the people themselves. In every instance it will be found to be an impulse communicated from the philosophy prevalent among the few, who consecrate their lives to thought and reflection.

True skepticism is then peculiar to men who reflect, whose social function, if I may use the expression, is thinking. Absolute skepticism is always foreign to the mass. The skepticism to which they are liable is actual skepticism ; and this is, as we have seen, not a determined disposition, but an accidental state of mind, consisting in a simple want of knowledge as to what the truth is upon the great questions of human interest.

No student of history, gentlemen, will deny that there have been eras, when this actual skepticism, this want of all faith and conviction, has been widely spread throughout the mass of mankind ; or that, on the contrary, there have been eras, when systems giving definite solutions of all great questions have prevailed. History shows us states of society, where whole nations, from

the child who has not begun to think, to the old man on the verge of life, have believed firmly in certain absolute dogmas; and it shows us also other states, where whole nations have been plunged in doubt and ignorance as to truth. As a matter of fact, then, there have been eras, when actual skepticism has pervaded the mass, and others, when it has been unknown.

History assigns to these different states of society names which are most distinctive of their peculiar characteristics. She calls the former *religious* eras, the latter *irreligious*; because in the one religion has prevailed, while in the other its influence has been wanting. For, observe, a system of faith upon the great questions of human interest, established on the common convictions of all men, of the enlightened, and of the people alike, always assumes the form and receives the name of a religion. Thus far, in the world's history, it has always been under a religious form, that the great ideas, which have possessed nations, and governed and guided them, have been exhibited. On the other hand, the eras, where the mass have wanted all faith and established convictions, have been those in which religious faith was annihilated, and where no religious doctrine prevailed. It is with good reason, then, that history distinguishes as religious the eras of faith, and as irreligious those of actual skepticism.

What, now, it may be asked, are the causes of this skepticism? I have elsewhere exhibited them, and they are at the present day well known. When a system of faith has prevailed among the mass for a length of time, there will and must come a period, sooner or later, when the errors, which are intermingled with

even the highest and most important truth in all human opinions, will strike the minds of the enlightened. Then springs up a spirit of critical examination, which, scrutinizing the whole system of faith, and discovering its various imperfections, ends by concluding, that where the parts are so defective, the whole system must be unworthy of credit in an advanced stage of society. It is among philosophers, or at least among the most intelligent members of society, that such a revolution commences; and it is among them that it is carried out and completed; but the results of their researches penetrate all classes, and finding their way down from the summit to the base of society, reach finally the mass, where, sapping and ruining all convictions and the whole system of truth, they produce a total want of faith. Such is the progress of actual skepticism among the people. It is a result of a foreign and superior influence, that is, of the action of philosophers, who, summing up the knowledge which the human race has attained, and comparing with it the prevailing faith, discover and announce that this received system is not on a level with the advanced intelligence of their age, and should therefore be rejected.

That we, gentlemen, at the present day, are living in such an era is so evident, that few would be inclined to question it. How, indeed, can it be denied that in most minds now there is an utter want of faith upon the great questions which interest man? And yet, in the midst of this actual skepticism, you cannot find a shadow of absolute philosophic skepticism. Indeed, if you could penetrate the minds of the mass, you could not find in their modes of thinking any one of the

grounds of absolute skepticism even so much as suspected. The people do not trouble themselves with asking, "What is the authority of the human faculties?" or, "What is the nature of the object of knowledge, or the nature of knowledge itself?" They are utterly ignorant whether the nature of our faculties, of the object of knowledge, and of knowledge itself, are, or are not, such as would lead to the conclusion, that the mind is incapable of arriving at truth. The mass never think of this. But further I will say, that even in the more intelligent portion of society, in that portion which thinks and reflects, and may properly be called the *philosophic* class, the elements of absolute skepticism are hardly to be found at all, or only in a very small degree. Without doubt, in our age, as in all ages, there are minds to which such considerations present themselves; but the incredulity of our age is not caused by them. The cause of prevalent incredulity is, simply, that all former solutions of interesting problems have been refuted, and that no others as yet are found. Our age is not so much skeptical, as it is wanting in faith; it does not believe that the truth cannot be discovered; it is merely ignorant of the truth.

The revolution, of which this state of mind is the result, had its origin long ago; it dates back not to the political revolution of 1830, nor the events of 1814, nor to the social revolution of 1789; it has come down from a much earlier age, and began as far back as the fifteenth century. I say as far, because we should find, on close examination, that it had an origin yet more remote.

In this revolution there have been two distinct periods, each having its peculiar causes, character, and

results; and we must distinguish these periods accurately, if we would form a precise notion of our present situation.

Before this want of all conviction, which I have described, can pervade any people, there must have been previously a conflict of longer or shorter duration, but still a violent one, against the dominant faith. Every such revolution, as we have been considering, has necessarily its origin in a period of warfare with prevalent opinions, terminating in their defeat and overthrow. Now, in the present instance, a controversy of this nature has been continued from earlier times to our own day; and it was indeed the striking and distinguishing characteristic of the eighteenth century, that it was incompetent to finish the controversy which had been transmitted to it. The eighteenth century was the closing scene of the first period of the revolution, in the midst of which we of the nineteenth century are living; it did not begin this revolution; it neither discovered nor announced its leading principles; but it did make them popularly known, and did disseminate their results through society. The eighteenth century acted an important part, therefore, in the progress of this revolution, for it exhibited plainly to all eyes the true nature of the controversy.

In this first period of the revolution, the loss of earlier convictions was not accompanied with a desire of another faith to supply their place. We do not find, in the skeptical writers of the eighteenth century, any longing expressed for faith. They were filled with a sense of the work of destruction which they were commissioned to perform; but, so far were they from being

conscious of a desire and need of faith, that they even rejoiced and triumphed in their skepticism as in their chief title to honor. We have reached an era now, however, when the results of this destructive war remain, without the joy in casting off belief which characterized the last century. This change is a momentous one, and it could not but come. It is not in our nature to remain satisfied without light upon the great questions of human interest: when the mind has once lost the truth, it must seek it anew, for it cannot live without it. It is only by a transient illusion, that, in the earlier period of the revolutionary era, rest and peace are sought in skepticism; no sooner is victory attained than the illusion is dissipated, and the need of faith again is felt. Then begins the second period of the revolutionary movement, a period in which, all conviction being destroyed, the desire for faith is once more felt with all its consequences. And this is precisely our situation at the present day; we have a want of faith and a longing for it. These are the two characteristics of our age. And our actual condition in all its detail will seem perfectly intelligible, and even such as he might have predicted, to any one, who fully comprehends the logical consequences, of these states of mind. Let us, then, attempt to follow out the chief of these consequences.

The striking and predominant trait of the eighteenth century, gentlemen, was a disposition to admit nothing as worthy of belief. As the work then to be completed was the destruction of all that was false, the tendency of every mind was to skepticism. But now, when a desire for faith coexists with a want of all conviction



and established principle, a wholly opposite disposition has been developed, even a disposition to believe every thing; and this disposition to believe every thing is really a distinctive characteristic of our age, often as men deceive themselves by calling it a skeptical one.

The consequences of this disposition to believe every thing have been different in different minds. Impelled by the common want, some have endeavored to reproduce the faith of past ages; and this was natural enough, because, as that faith had already once received a definite and complete shape, it was necessary only to readopt it. This class of persons have pronounced their anathema against the three last centuries, and all that they have accomplished, especially against the eighteenth, the most fatal of all to previously established convictions. Devotees to the past, they admire and honor it, and seek to reestablish in their minds, and rekindle in their hearts, that faith which these three centuries have extinguished. Another class have become utterly discouraged; and seeing behind them only ruined and overthrown convictions, and before them an empty void, they have given up all hope of finding truth. This is the party of despair. There is a third class, incomparably the largest, who are waiting for a good which the future is to bring; they, too, feel the want of faith, but they neither despair of finding it, nor do they seek it in the past, — they look for it to the coming time.

It is natural and necessary that the party of the past and the party of despair should be small in number and in influence; the third party only, which, impelled by

common want, seek to satisfy it by the discovery of a new moral order of the social world, can hope for success.

This movement of loving and seeking for a new faith has introduced a new period in the revolution. It began with the persuasion that the faith of the future must be directly opposite to that of the past—an illusion quite natural and conformable to the laws of the human mind. We all reason thus in great and small affairs alike; it is the first and instinctive movement of the human mind. This reaction produced a general tendency to the opposite of what had already been. We had been living under an absolute government; we were driven, therefore, to the opposite of such a government, that is, to a democracy. The philosophy of the Christian faith which had prevailed was eminently spiritual; a material faith was therefore introduced to reign for its moment. Art, too, under the influence of Christianity, had been spiritual and ideal, like the convictions which it embodied; and art, therefore, must become, as it did under David, first material, and then, somewhat later, fond of the actual, and even of the deformed. The morality of a Christian era had been a morality of devotedness, of self-sacrifice, productive of greatness of soul and character; the morality which followed the triumph of skepticism was that of pleasure and self-interest. Such were the first fruits of the reconstructive impulse, which, setting out from the void that doubt had brought, rushed into the opposite of what had been, with frenzied ardor. The necessary result of such a movement was to produce such an exaggerated and unnatural mode of thinking as could

not long fail to awaken disgust and dread. And for this plain reason ; when skepticism succeeds in overturning a system of faith that has long prevailed over any large portion of the human race, it is on account of the errors and imperfections of that system. But skepticism is not confined to these errors, and does not limit itself to a demand of their rejection ; reasoning from the parts to the whole, it pronounces the entire system false, and the generations absurd which have held it. Hence the illusion that truth will be found in what is exactly opposite to past conviction. Now, it is impossible that the human race should be governed for ages by ideas which are wholly false : there must, then, have been a large portion of truth in any doctrine which has for a length of time been generally admitted ; for thus, and thus only, could it have acquired and preserved its ascendancy. To throw ourselves, then, in our desire to reconstruct a faith, headlong into the very opposite of what has heretofore been believed, is necessarily to turn away from much which certainly is true, in the search of what may be either true or not. Systems which originate in such a mad movement of reaction, are destined always to disappear, after a short existence, before the good sense of mankind. And thus already have we seen the reign of materialism and deformity disappear from art. And in literature, also, the impassioned style, which has overstepped and trampled down the rules of Aristotle and Boileau, may be considered as nearly exhausted and soon to pass away. The same movement carried us from the old political *regime* to extreme and unlimited democracy ; but already has this tendency begun to be most seriously and severely

judged by that good sense, which sees at once its inconveniences and excesses. The reign of materialism has been of short duration ; and already, in the hearts of the young, at least, is spiritualism enthroned : indeed, it would be difficult to find, in society at large, any individuals advocating that moral code of mere pleasure, which was openly professed by the most respectable of the last century. It appears plain, therefore, that many of the extreme tendencies of the reaction are already dead, while others show symptoms of decay.

The systems which resulted from these tendencies, were thus destined to be short lived ; the fruits of a blind reaction, they were blind and fanatical themselves. And now that their ephemeral reign is ended, we are fast falling, and have, in part, already fallen into a state yet worse than that which immediately succeeded the triumph of skepticism. Then, indeed, there was an absence of all faith, but there was not a want of confidence in our power of attaining to truth ; for we had not yet tested the power by trial, and it seemed as if it would be easy to find new solutions of the problems of greatest interest to man, in place of former ones, which were destroyed. But now, when the first efforts of reason, in the examination of these questions, has failed, — now, when we have seen only systems invented, so foolish as to deserve no respect, — doubt arises as to the capacity of human intelligence to re-discover the truth which we have lost ; and hence a more profound uncertainty and a deeper consciousness of want of faith than was felt at first. From this feeling of want and of uncertainty

have originated the most striking peculiarities of the present age.

You may have remarked that, when, in meditating by yourselves, or in conversation with others, you seek to determine what is beautiful or deformed, true or false, good or bad, you meet with difficulties; and that, in all debates upon such questions, each side seems to have reasons in its favor, and defenders; so that it actually appears as if arguments for and against were equally strong and worthy of consideration.

But, gentlemen, do you, therefore, conclude that this is the natural state of human intelligence, or that these are phenomena common to all eras? By no means. It is the absence, in our day, of any *criterion* of true and false, of good and bad, of beauty and deformity, which produces this condition of things. As all first principles have been destroyed, all rules to guide the judgment have been abolished also; and, without a common rule recognized by judgment, we cannot have a common understanding with others, or arrive at a certain solution of any question. And what is the consequence? Each individual will feel that he is free to believe as he chooses, and will declare, with authority, his chosen faith. By what test shall it be condemned? By that of some grand truth which is recognized and admitted? There is none. By the authority, then, only of any one who disputes his opinion, and who, as he is his equal, cannot be his judge. In our day, individuals reign supreme; their authority is complete and unlimited. And, as the right of each individual to think as he pleases, has naturally produced an infinite variety of

opinions, all equal in worth and authority, the result is that state of complete intellectual anarchy amid which we are living. On the one side is the unlimited authority of the individual; for this authority is subject to no common faith, no admitted criterion of truth, by which all minds are governed and directed, and around which they rally. On the other side is an infinite diversity of opinion; for, as the authority of one individual is equal to that of another, each is entitled to call his opinion true. Individuality and anarchy, then, are the two great characteristics of our era; they are inevitable in the present age, and, as we see, they every where prevail.

One further circumstance coöperates to establish this state of intellectual democracy. It is experience which chiefly produces inequality between men, storing, as it does, the minds of those who have lived longest with the greatest variety of facts and ideas. But it is the tendency of eras like our own to call in question this incontrovertible fact. Succeeding to long ages which have believed in what is now proved to be false, it has, and cannot but have, a contempt for the past; the past is to it the symbol of error; thus far it thinks men have known nothing and doubted nothing; truth is to be sought and found in the future; the more attached we are to the past, the further are we from truth; and truth is nearer, the more we live in the future and the younger we are. Hence the thorough disdain for experience and antiquity which marks our times. The young man of to-day measures himself with those of many years;

and, before his school days are over, the boy thinks and declares himself equal to his sire; and this state of things is a strict and necessary consequence of what has gone before. This notion of the equality of minds is carried so far, that the judgment of eighteen has as much authority as that of fifty; and the reasoning of a day laborer, on a question of policy, is considered as decisive as that of a statesman whose whole life has been passed in the midst of public affairs, or of a student grown gray in thought. Undoubtedly, the good sense which survives the greatest aberrations of human intelligence, will moderate this intellectual democracy, and check the consequences which may be seen logically to flow from it; but, though checked, they yet more or less appear, as if to make mankind aware of their tendencies.

This is not all, gentlemen: the conviction that the past has been deceived, leads to a disregard of the serious study of historical facts; and the conviction that there is no criterion for truth, produces a contempt for reflection; and hence results a profound ignorance, which, combined with presumption, are two characteristic traits of the present intellectual era. The consequence of this upon the literary productions of our time, is the amazing folly with which notions, at once the most absurd and trite, are confidently thrown out, and the utter want of all such positive knowledge as would authorize the confidence. These two defects are, however, but the necessary consequences of the individuality and intellectual anarchy which disturb us: they are the natural result

of our present situation, which is itself a necessary period in the revolutionary movement now passing around us.

The effect of the various facts which I have now been describing, is a general weakness of character. Character, indeed, scarcely exists in our day, and for this reason; of the two elements of which character is composed, — firm will and fixed principles, — the second is wanting, and the first, therefore, powerless. For to what end would be a firm will without fixed principles? A mighty instrument, doubtless, but a useless one. Governed and directed by strong conviction, it will work wonders of decision, of devotedness, of constancy and heroism. But in such an age as ours, without established faith and fixed ideas, and without, moreover, the power of forming them, where the only authority is the caprice of individuals, who, proud of independence, glory in deciding in every case for themselves, how can such a will exist? He who has faith is proof against the absurd ideas and foolish imaginations which visit even the soundest mind: strong in his convictions, he applies them as a test and a criterion; and chimeras, fancies, and inconsistencies disappear, while that alone, which is in harmony with his convictions, remains. But we, who are without faith, want this criterion; and, therefore, we can neither judge, approve, nor blame. And, consequently, as a fact, we neither do approve nor condemn; we accept and tolerate every thing; and, by turns, the sport of wholly opposite opinions, we are wanting in well-ordered purposes, in definite plans for conduct, and in dignity of character. What I



now state is not brought forward in the way of reproach, but as a matter of fact; our age is what it actually is by necessity. I only describe and explain it.

The love of change, gentlemen, is another characteristic of our present intellectual condition. Love of any kind is only a desire for something which we need; and our great need now is, of those truths which may restore and regenerate individuals and society; it is in the future only that we can expect to find them. Hence our age is looking with hope and love to that future, and gives itself up cheerfully to change. We seem to be living not so much in the present as in the future, and receive each novelty with rapturous enthusiasm; as if, because new, it was that of which we feel the want. The secret and unconscious longing of our hearts is for something yet untried, as if it alone could satisfy our desires.

Hence that indiscriminate passion for revolution, which makes us the dupes and tools of each adventurer's ambitious dreams, and renders vain the sacrifices and the cost of social convulsion.

For, observe, what we need is no mere outward change. Let society pass through any number of outward revolutions, and, unless the ideas which it is in want of are thereby supplied, they will leave it exactly where it was, and will be wholly useless. What we want is, an answer to these questions, which Christianity has heretofore answered, but which, to many, remain unanswered now; and nothing is so ill calculated to supply this want, as tumults in the

streets, and overturns of governments. Reflection alone makes discoveries in truth, and peace is needed for reflection. Outward revolutions are, indeed, of service, when they tend to realize the truths which have already been discovered; but to desire revolution, when the truths for which an age is sighing are yet unknown, and as a means for discovering them, is to commit the absurdity of wishing that the consequence should produce its principle, or an end its means.

This, however, is the very thing which the multitude does not see; it is so deluded as to expect, from every future change, that new and unknown something which may make them happy. They hurry on to revolution with blind madness, impatient of the present, eager for the future. Before this torrent of popular passion no institution can stand, no government endure. Hence such short-lived popularity as we continually see. When a new man appears in the political world, we greet him with admiration and honor. Why? Because we hope that in him we have at last found one who can satisfy our wants. And what follows? As he, no more than we ourselves, has any answer for the problems which we wish to solve, in a few weeks after his elevation to power, we find him barren and empty as his predecessors, and at once his popularity declines. In our day, in fact, the mere possession of power is reason sufficient for unpopularity. They only are, or can be, popular, who have not yet acquired the power they seek. They, as yet, have not uttered their secret; and the moment when they are in a position to declare it, and when it appears that they, like the rest, have

no more to tell, the warm favor which welcomed them grows cool, for the illusion which made them great is gone.

From what has now been said, gentlemen, you can readily perceive the cause of the unhappiness of that collective being, called a government, in our day. The people are like children, who feel a want, and cry to the nurse for something,—she can neither discover nor imagine what,—and which, very possibly, may be wholly out of reach. The people feel a painful uneasiness, but they know not its cause; and they complain, therefore, now of the form of government under which they live, and then of those who conduct it, because the evil which they suffer from is not rooted out. They forever desire to substitute other men for those now in power; in place of established forms, they would have new ones; and, for existing laws, and the social order already prevailing, they seek new laws and a new order; persuaded that the source of the evil is in the government, in the laws, in the organization of society, and that, with the change of these, they shall find what they seek. But, were all changed, they would still remain as unhappy and discontented as at first; for the changes they desire are only outward and material, not moral, while it is a moral change of which there really is a need. And, as long as the desired solutions of these questions remain unfound, in the light of which society is to be remodelled in a form adequate to the wants of the human mind, so long will society continue to pass through a constant succession of ineffectual changes.

Whence arose that social structure, whose foundations the three last centuries have sapped, and which the revolution finally overthrew? It arose from the solutions which Christianity had given of the great problems of human interest. These solutions, unlike those proposed by the wise of our time, were not negative in character; and hence the results to which they led in art, religion, and politics, were positive. Institutions and laws proceeded from them; organizations and forms of government, social and political order, were wrapped as a germ in these solutions; and this order has been, and could not but have been, unfolded in past ages. At the present day, this order is destroyed; and, to produce another in its room, we need a new germ; that is to say, new solutions of those grand questions which Christianity has heretofore answered. These questions must be answered before either individuals or communities can be reorganized, and reproduce a new system of life and conduct. How, indeed, can they, who know not the end for which they are living upon earth, determine the manner in which they ought to live? And, ignorant of this, how can they constitute, organize, and regulate society? If we know not the destiny of individuals, we cannot know that of society; and, if we know not the destiny of society, we cannot organize it. A religious and moral faith is, then, the only possible solution of political problems. We have not such a faith; and no outward revolution, therefore, whatsoever, can accomplish any thing for society.

We cannot meditate too much upon these con-

siderations, if we would acquire a distinct and accurate view of the present state of things; for here, and not elsewhere, is its explanation. But the people are ignorant of their true condition, and their blind and generous impulses, therefore, are used as instruments by ambitious men. Each day appear a crowd of empirics, who promise, on the single condition of being raised to power, that they can supply the want of which all are conscious, and seek in vain to satisfy. The intelligent and enlightened see that these quacks abuse their power; but, as if they had really found that unknown something for which all are craving, they talk of *republic*, of *unlimited suffrage*, of *legitimacy*; and, seduced by the word, which we mistake for a thing, we passionately pursue the untried good, and discover our mistake only when experience has proved that it is an empty name. Thus, again and again, we give new names to the unknown good, and chase a thousand phantoms, which can never satisfy us, but will forever leave us discontented as before. Here is the explanation of the constant disappointments, which, for forty years, the friends of social liberty have experienced in France.

By turns, each new form of freedom has seemed to be the good for which we were sighing, and a want of it the source of all our woes. But, when successively we have acquired them, and yet found ourselves unimproved in condition, we are restless as before; and a revolution is scarcely over, when the plan is sketched for a new one. The cause of this is our ignorance of our own condition. These various forms of civil liberty, which we have been

struggling for, — civil liberty itself, even, — is not, and cannot be, the end which society, in our day, is really pursuing. It is, indeed, an advantage of free communities, that no master can turn them from the pursuit of their true end, and impose upon them one of his own choosing; and they have this additional advantage, that they are better fitted than other communities to discover and accomplish their true destiny. In this twofold aspect, the various successive forms of civil liberty have been beneficial; but beyond this they have brought no good. Liberty is nothing more than an opportunity offered to a people of accomplishing its destiny, and a guaranty that it shall not be hindered from so doing: liberty is not, in itself, the accomplishment of that destiny. The same may be said of order; and it is plain, therefore, that the true destiny of a community is something different from, and superior to, both liberty and order.

Do you doubt this, gentlemen? Examine, then, the various rights which we now enjoy, and see if they are any thing more than opportunities and means. We were filled with a passion for popular election, and, after long struggles, secured the privilege; and, in consequence, a large number of our fellow-citizens now take a part in the appointment of the highest public functionaries. And, when, at great expense, we assemble our citizens to elect those who shall command the national militia, or become municipal counsellors, or counsellors of departments, or members of the chamber of deputies, what do we really accomplish? Two things. In the first place,

we give a pledge that no individual shall be allowed to substitute his private interests for those of his country, or to prevent the nation from accomplishing its destiny; and, secondly, we intrust to the assembled citizens the responsibility of determining and declaring what measures are most for the public good, or, at least, of sending to the various national councils men who can decide upon them, or elect, among themselves, competent persons to be in power. Such are the reasons for which popular elections are valuable; but of these two results, one positive and the other negative, mere election attains only the first; it really does prevent any individual from using the country for his own purposes; and this is all that it can do; for, if the electors and those elected are ignorant of what constitutes the public good, it is plain that our wants will not be satisfied, and, therefore, that mere liberty of elections will not secure the end we seek. The same may be said with regard to liberty of the press, and all other civil rights; so that, however desirous we may be of obtaining various forms of freedom and civil institutions, we shall deceive ourselves greatly, if we suppose that they can, by themselves, afford a remedy to social ills. Forms and institutions are but pledges and protections against whatever threatens to impede the progress of a moral revolution; and, possibly, they may be a means also to advance it; but this is all; a moral revolution only can cure our social diseases. I say that the exercise of civil right may, *possibly*, be a means of advancing this revolution, because, high as is my respect for the popular mind, I yet think this popular mind, this com-

mon sense, rather fitted to recognize truth than to discover it; of all the great truths which have influenced the destinies of the human race, I know not one which originated in the instinct of the mass; they have all been the discoveries of gifted individuals, and the fruit of the solitary meditations of thinking men. But once brought to light, once exhibited, and it is the adoption of them by the mass of the people, which consecrates them.

What has now been said of our present moral condition, will sufficiently indicate the course of conduct which every wise and earnest man, is, in our era, bound to pursue, in view of his own dignity and the interests of his country.

And first, it is his duty to be calm, to raise himself above, and to escape from the chimerical dreams to which the mass of men are the prey; and thus be preserved from the delusive and absurd schemes which are their natural result. To attain this state of mind, it is only necessary to comprehend the universal law of revolution, and the precise period of the revolution now passing, at which we, in this age, have arrived. If, in what is going on around us, we accustom ourselves to see the successive phases of a grand law of humanity in the process of development, we shall be less disposed to abandon ourselves to the passionate fears and hopes, to the ardent attachments and aversions, which every new party and event, however trifling, will otherwise awaken. It is only when we regard them from this elevation that we can judge of their real importance. When we take a comprehensive view of the mighty revolution, which, for



the three last centuries, has been agitating Europe, and consider its sources and tendencies; when we measure what has been accomplished with what remains yet undone; when we call to mind the slowness with which it has thus far advanced, and with which it is destined to advance in the time to come, and then conceive distinctly of the true nature of this revolution, and the end at which it aims;—how trifling appear many events called important! How momentous others, at first sight small! Each object then assumes its just dimensions, and the illusions and passions which had confused the view are scattered, even if they do not wholly disappear.

For those who live in the future, and who are seeking, from government and the laws, a good which no individuals can bestow,—that unknown and mysterious something which the future veils,—that ineffable ideal, the desire of which prompts each social movement, and which, for myself, I call a new system of faith on the grand questions which must forever interest man,—for all such persons, a clear understanding of the nature of the passing revolution, and of the precise point at which it has now arrived, is well calculated to moderate impatience. For, when we once comprehend what is really to be accomplished, we see that it cannot be done in a moment, but that it must necessarily be the fruit of long labor, and slowly perfected; and that it is not in the power of institutions or laws to hasten the fulness of time. Past history bears witness that such a revolution must be gradual. A state of society

similar to our own prevailed in Greece before the introduction of Christianity, and was brought to an end by that event. Skepticism made its appearance in Greece six centuries at least before the Christian era—in the time of Thales; individuals of enlightened minds had already begun to entertain doubts of the prevalent faith; and, two centuries later, in the time of Socrates, there were probably but very few among the citizens exercising political rights, who were not wholly given up to incredulity. Socrates was condemned, to be sure, on the ground that he attacked religion; but his sentence was dictated really by political reasons; and we, in this day, have seen a parallel instance, in a neighboring country, of this union between private incredulity and public profession of faith. If, then, the ancient faith in Greece was destroyed four centuries before the coming of Jesus Christ, and if philosophy, even at that early period, had begun to seek for new and higher forms of truth, it is plain that mankind were kept for centuries in waiting for that positive faith which could alone reorganize it. Yet more; it is well known, that the establishment of the Christian religion, in the minds of the common people, did not immediately follow its first introduction; it penetrated to them only by slow degrees, and centuries were needed to complete its progress. When, then, we attempt to measure the time needed to perfect and finish this former revolution, we find that the human race was occupied for nearly a thousand years in their passage from paganism to Christianity. God forbid that I should assert that the human mind,

with the immense power which it has acquired in the course of eighteen centuries, will require so long a period as this to finish the work which it has begun in our day; and far be it from me to think that the revolution now in progress is to lead to any such complete change of opinion. Christianity has too strong a foundation in truth ever to disappear, as paganism did; its destruction was but a dream of the eighteenth century, which never will be realized. But, undoubtedly, it is to be purified; undoubtedly, it is to receive new forms and important additions; for, otherwise, the strife it has excited, the incredulity which yet prevails, and the long struggles and labors of the whole of Christendom, have been without a meaning and a cause; and this it is impossible to believe. As yet, when we view it rightly, this revolution has been but three centuries in progress; and we must not allow ourselves to imagine that by to-morrow we shall reach its end; neither should it astonish us, since the first period of this revolution has so lately terminated, that we have now arrived at only its second period. Many generations may very possibly pass away before the faith of futurity will assume a definite shape, and be planted deep in the hearts of the multitude, to bless them with the *Credo* for which they now sigh in vain. And, during the intervening period, the world may remain, as in ancient times, a prey to that state of intellectual and moral anarchy which we have described, and which nothing but the manifestation of some new form of faith can remove. It was Christianity that cured this evil in ancient times; and it worked a

moral cure before it did a material one. The moral remedy was the principle, of which the material was the consequence. Our cure must proceed in a like manner; first, truth, and then social reformation, as the effect of truth. Such is the law of revolution. At present, there is hardly the faint appearance and first dawning of new solutions of the great questions of human interest. And it is plain, therefore, that we are, as yet, far distant from the last period and final completion of this revolution. The journals, which day by day announce a new order of things, give no description of this better state. They say, and say truly, that the present order does not meet our wants; but they do not tell us what should supply its place. This, indeed, is precisely what they are incapable of doing; for they, like the people, feel only the want of truths which are yet undiscovered, and they, like the people, too, are ignorant of them. They would be nearer the truth, if they did but know that they were ignorant of it; and they would be nearer still, if they comprehended that as yet it cannot be known.

Such, gentlemen, are the means by which we may preserve a calm mind, in this feverish and agitated era. But we must do more than this; we must not only preserve the mind calm, we must direct it. And, in this regard, how can we do better than imitate the example of those men, who, in an age similar to our own, — the age which followed the overthrow of the ancient faith, — so lived, that their names have been revered through succeeding times? These

men, who were the Stoics, announced, in the midst of universal anarchy and corruption, the imperishable principles of morality; established rules for private duty, when all public law was broken down; and, sheltering themselves in virtue, passed, untainted, through the most polluted era that history records. We need but mention the names of Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, and their illustrious friends, to show that it is in the power of individuals to preserve their characters and conduct pure, amidst the ruins of even the corruptest ages. We, then, certainly can do it, — we, who live in an age so much more elevated in character, under the light of Christianity, and of a philosophy purified by its power. It is entirely possible for any individual, who will seek seriously to distinguish good from evil, to keep his mind and conscience clear from the swarm of absurd and immoral notions which an incredible license of thought, yet more than of feeling, lets loose each day upon society, from the journals, the theatre, and books. There is no one, who cannot, by consulting good sense and his own heart, plan out, for himself, a course of conduct conformable to the purest maxims of morality, and, by firm purpose, remain faithful to it, and realize his ideal. This is possible for us, one and all; and what we can do, we ought to do. No one is excusable for not preserving, inviolate, his character and reason, in a period like the present; for, although there are, in our social condition, circumstances which may be temptations to those who will allow themselves to be led astray

and corrupted, yet it is to prepare us for precisely such situations, that God has endowed us with judgment and with will.

And our country, gentlemen, — our country, which, next to integrity and honor, should be the first object of regard, — is there not, in our time, as in all times, a way of being useful to her? There is; it is to make her true situation, and the causes of it, known to all her children; to explain to them the secret of their wants, the nature of the good which all are craving, and the means best adapted to its acquisition. This, in my judgment, is the only possible way of keeping society calm and well ordered, when society is without a faith. We must, then, enlighten as much as we can the great body of the people: never was light so necessary, never did they need discernment more. When society is under the influence of an established faith, the catechism neutralizes the effects of ignorance. But when minds without convictions are left an undefended prey to all ideas, good and bad, useful and injurious, as they may arise, there is but one source of safety, and that is, the diffusion of such a degree of information as may enable each citizen to discern his own true interest, and the actual condition of his country. All, of our day, who understand the times, have a mission of patriotism to discharge; it is to communicate to others their own information, and thus aid in calming down the moral conflicts of the public mind, as they have calmed their own. To one who really comprehends the present state of things, there is no cause for fear. And once free from fear, we can meditate,

we can plan our course, we can work, we can live. But when we rise each morning, in the dread of ruin, with the feeling that we are on the verge of some terrible catastrophe, thought becomes impossible; we can but abandon ourselves to the current of events, and there is an end at once to labor and reflection, to all plans for life, and all developments of character; like leaves, we become the sport of each passing breeze.

And now, after what I have said in this lecture of the fruitlessness of mere outward and material revolutions, — after the proof I have offered that they never can advance society towards the good which it is seeking, but that they produce always disorder and suffering, — need I add, that it is the duty of every enlightened man and good citizen to prevent, if possible, such useless evil. Once more I repeat, therefore, that when it is the object of outward revolution to realize and complete a moral revolution, then, and then only, revolution is both reasonable and right. But when a conviction of the need of a moral organization for society, so far from being generally established in the mind and heart of the community, is not even apprehended by those who profess to be the heralds of civilization, — in such a case, revolution can only bring uncompensated suffering; and every friend of his country should withhold his aid. In speaking to you thus, gentlemen, I am not preaching a sermon. I do but simply unfold to your view the necessary consequence of the great law of revolution, to which humanity is subject. My frankness and freedom will not, I am confident, be misunderstood.

## LECTURE XI.

SYSTEMS WHICH MISCONCEIVE AND MUTILATE THE LAW  
OF OBLIGATION.

## THE SELFISH SYSTEM. — HOBBS.

GENTLEMEN,

THE systems which we have thus far examined make no attempt to determine whether there is, or is not, any law of obligation. This question, indeed, never presented itself to the minds of their authors. They were occupied in considering quite different ones; and it was only in an incidental way, while discussing questions wholly foreign in appearance from the fundamental one of ethics, that they were led, actually, to deny the existence of the law of obligation in human nature.

But we come, now, to another class of systems, which are essentially ethical systems, and which come to this same result, of denying the existence of the law of obligation, by an actual examination of the questions whether there does exist in our nature any, and, if any, what rule for conduct? They do not all, however, reach this common conclusion in the same way. Seeking in the human mind for the original principle of morality and right, on which



all ethics and legislation must be based, some of these systems go wholly astray, and believe that they find it either in self-love, or in some of our primitive tendencies; while others, feeling that it must, in its nature, be impersonal and disinterested, place it in a conception of the reason, indeed, where truly it is to be found; but, mistaking the character of this conception, they fall into various errors. We might, with good reason, divide these systems, then, into two categories; the first embracing those which destroy the law of obligation, by wholly misconceiving its essential nature; and the second those which produce the same result, by the false view which they give of this nature. But I shall not, at present, insist upon this distinction, for it is not in itself a very important one; and it is difficult, in express terms, to describe it, so equivocal is all philosophical language. It will be easier to make this distinction manifest, after a discussion of these systems.

The first of these systems which I shall present to you—and it deserves this preference on account of its celebrity—is the system of self-interest, of which, in modern times, Hobbes has been the most famous teacher. This and the following lecture will be devoted to a criticism of the principles and theory of this philosopher.

It continually happens, gentlemen, that we perform acts, because we see that they will be followed by a pleasure; and, again, we continually pursue objects, because we know that the possession of them will give gratification. On the other hand, we often refuse to perform acts, or avoid objects, because we

think that such performance or possession will be a source of pain. This motive to choice is one, then, which is familiar to us all; and every day's experience must exhibit its operation to even the most careless observer. Now, Hobbes declares that this is the *sole* motive of human choice. He asserts that the end of *every* action is the pursuit of pleasure, or the escape from pain; and, generalizing his observation, he thus expresses the formula which is the principle of his system — *well-being is the end of man*.

Observe, gentlemen, Hobbes uses the expression *well-being*, not *good*. In fact, the general term which represents an agreeable state is not *good*, but *well-being*, or, if you please, *happiness*. If Hobbes had said *happiness is the end of man*, he would perfectly have expressed his idea; and he equally expresses it in the language which he has adopted — *well-being is the end of man*. But he would have done injustice to his thoughts, had he said *good is the end of man*; for the word *good* suggests to all minds — even to those most preoccupied with the conviction that the end of all our actions is happiness — some ideas quite different from those of enjoyment and pleasure. The expression of Hobbes is, then, the most strictly exact which he could employ to convey his idea.

If the end of every act is pleasure, it follows necessarily that the universal motive of every act is the desire of pleasure. For the same reason, then, that Hobbes has said that the final end of every act is well-being, he should have said that the universal motive of human conduct is the desire of well-being.

Thus, then, to express the whole system of Hobbes in brief, we may say, well-being is the end of every action, and the love of well-being the universal motive of human conduct. This is the actual theory, which he adopts and professes, as to the law of human volition.

His principle once established, Hobbes proceeds, with the strict logic for which he is justly celebrated, to deduce from it a series of consequences. These I will now exhibit. There are two classes of these consequences—the first, metaphysical and direct; the second, remote, and extending to ethics and politics.

If it is true, gentlemen, that the sole reason which can determine a man to perform any act, or seek any object, is the pleasure attending the accomplishment of the one, and the possession of the other, it follows necessarily, that the condition requisite for any act of will is the anticipation of that pleasure. This universal motive, as Hobbes considers it, of human action, then, cannot impel us, without a conception, recognized by reason, of the consequences which will accompany the act, and the attainment of the object. This condition being fulfilled, we can act; otherwise, we cannot.

A second direct consequence of the principle is, that all objects and acts are matters of indifference to us, except in so far as we conceive of them as producing certain effects upon ourselves; for, in what, according to the system of Hobbes, does all the good or evil of acts or objects consist? Solely in their fitness to produce pleasure or pain. We must be acquainted, then, with their fitness or unfitness to

produce pleasure, before we can determine their moral quality; and the only moral quality which we can ever discover in them is this property of producing pain or pleasure.

If this is true, that the only ground on which we can desire or dislike, seek or avoid certain acts or objects, is, that they appear to us fitted to produce pleasurable or painful consequences, then it follows, in the third place, that we have not a variety of passions, as is usually supposed, but a single passion only, which is the love of personal well-being, of our own pleasure, our individual happiness. The passions, therefore, numerous and various as they appear, are so only externally — only in relation to the material objects affecting them: within us these different passions are found to be, and can only be, transformations of one single passion; and that is the love and desire of personal well-being. Hobbes did not hesitate to resolve all human passions into this single one; and he was led, therefore, to give such definitions and explanations of these passions as seem strange enough; but they are, nevertheless, the only ones which he consistently could give.

For example, the human heart has an instinctive impulse to reverence God; and an emotion of the same nature is felt towards certain men. Now, what, according to Hobbes, is *reverence*? It is a conception of the superior power of the person whom we honor. Again, a wholly opposite sentiment is awakened in us by another class of persons — the sentiment of the ridiculous. How does Hobbes explain this? It is a conception, he says, of our own superiority to the person we laugh at. Once more; we see, at each moment, and under a thou-

sand forms, the sentiment of love manifested in all social relations, in the mother towards her child, in the child towards its mother, in the lover towards his mistress, and in friend towards friend. What is love, according to Hobbes? It is a conception of the utility of the loved person. Thus, the mute adoration of a mother, hanging over the cradle of her child, is only a foresight of the service which that child may, at some future day, render. What is pity? It is the imagination of a misfortune which may one day happen to ourselves, as we contemplate the misery of another. Benevolence, kindness, charity, what are they? They are all but manifestations of the consciousness of power, sufficient to produce happiness, not only for ourselves, but also for others. You can judge from these examples of the rigorous logic with which Hobbes traces back all our passions, even those apparently the most disinterested and remote from any pursuit of individual good, to self-love. And thus he was obliged to do; for had he but once admitted the existence of any other sentiment in our nature than the love of our own well-being, his whole system would have been overthrown.

What, according to this system, is the first and greatest good? Assuredly the preservation of the individual. For the indispensable condition for happiness is existence; if life is lost, all enjoyment becomes, of course, impossible. The greatest of all evils, then, is death. What we are to seek above all things, in pursuit of our highest well-being, is self-preservation; what we are most earnestly to shun is destruction.

All such consequences as these are the necessary

results of the system adopted by Hobbes. But thus far they are only theoretical. Let us pass on to others, which bear directly upon the conduct and practice of life.

Admit that man is constituted as Hobbes supposes; place with him the principle of all choice in the love of happiness, and grant that human conduct, profoundly analyzed, confirms this view, — what follows? Necessarily, inevitably it follows, that all means, which can conduce to this simple and only true end of man, must be good and lawful; or, in other words, that man has a right to appropriate, by every means in his power, whatever will contribute to his own well-being. The course of conduct truly proper and rational is determined, then, by this consideration, that it leads to individual happiness. All acts, all conduct, which conduce to this, are, for that very reason, good, proper, lawful. The right to do any thing and every thing, which can increase our well-being, is, then, according to Hobbes, imprescriptible. And this right is the foundation of ethics. He says this with reason; for by ethics is meant, in every language, precisely the ideal of that course of conduct which is good, proper, and conformable to reason.

Now, well-being is an individual thing; if, therefore, the desire of well-being is the sole source of all volitions, as it cannot be the well-being of another that I desire, I must be impelled by a desire for my own. Every one has his own view of well-being, and of pleasure; every one determines for himself what are the means fitted to attain it; constitutions are unlike; tastes differ, each has his own estimate of happiness, and of the proper

way to gain it: the only judge, therefore, of what is good as an end, or good as a means, must be the individual himself. There can be no other. Whence it follows, that ends and means become good by the mere fact that they are considered to be so by the individual. There may be, therefore, as many modes of right conduct as there are persons, because every one may have his own way of conceiving of happiness and of the modes of attaining it, and all modes are in themselves equally good. There cannot be one system of ethics, then; but there must be as many systems as there are individuals. And thus two courses of conduct, the most different and opposite, may be equally proper; for, to make them so, it is only necessary that they should be considered by the individual as conducive to his well-being. The individual is supreme; his judgment is sovereign; he creates right and wrong; by his own choice he produces good, and at his will destroys it.

Such are the consequences of Hobbes's system in relation to individual conduct. Let us turn now to its political consequences. He has deduced them from his main principle with equal strictness of reasoning. If every one has a right of deciding for himself upon whatever is necessary to the attainment of his best good, and if no other person has a right to pass judgment, either upon the end or means which he selects, it follows, necessarily, that each individual has a right to the possession of all things. For can we conceive of any thing which may not be included in the idea of individual good, either as an end or a means? The individual, then, has a right to every thing. And, therefore, in a state of nature, the right of each indi-

vidual extends, without exception, to all things which exist.

But if each has this rightful claim to all things, there must be a collision and conflict of rights. If I desire the possession of a certain object as necessary to my well-being, my neighbor may consider it necessary to his, and may look upon my act of taking possession as injurious to him. Hence inevitable contests. The right of each individual to the possession of any and every object produces, necessarily, therefore, a strife between one and all; it sets every individual at war with all others. It follows as a necessary consequence, then, from Hobbes's system, that the natural condition of individuals is one of conflict. Hence his celebrated axiom, "War is the state of nature;" and this not an accidental nor partial war, but a war unceasing and universal of every man with every other man.

Now, to one who regards happiness as the greatest good, nothing can be worse, as Hobbes has clearly seen, than such a state of war. For what, according to his theory, is good? It is every thing that tends to produce happiness. What, then, can be worse than a state, the characteristic of which is, that each individual is continually exposed to attack from the united forces of all other individuals? Evidently, in such a state of things, the individual must, sooner or later, be destroyed, and thus, in consequence, entirely hindered from obtaining happiness. No other state can so completely prevent all possibility of well-being; no other state can threaten so continually the existence of the individual; and this, be it remembered, is the greatest good of all, because it is the necessary condi-



tion of every other. The state of war is, then, the worst possible, if Hobbes's system is true; and yet it is the state of nature. Hence his bold conclusion that peace at any cost, peace on any conditions, is preferable to this state of nature, this state of war. But peace is the effect of society; it is society alone that can establish it, and destroy that state of war, which is man's natural and primitive condition.

What, then, according to Hobbes, is society? The nature of society is determined wholly by its constituent element, and this element is the existence of a power sufficient to prevent, among a number of collected individuals, the natural state of war.

Such is the exact definition of society, according to Hobbes. He finds in it nothing more. What, then, is the end of society? The repression of the state of war. What is the original cause of the formation of society? The misery of the natural state. Hobbes is ready to admit, however, that there are two possible ways in which society may originate. The first is by contract; and such a contract is made whenever different individuals, feeling the inconveniences of the state of nature, and condemning it as the worst of all conditions, agree to establish a force, which shall be superior to that of any individual, and capable of destroying him, if necessary, in suppressing war and substituting for it peace. Society, thus formed, originates in contract. But there is another mode of forming society. A single man may, by cunning or power, succeed in extending his authority over a multitude of others, and thus establish a social state. Here society is based on the right of the strongest; but it is none

the worse on that account, because, according to Hobbes, the only characteristic of society is the existence of a power sufficiently strong to repress war between individuals; this being done, society exists; and, since the right of the strongest can produce this result as well as contract, society can originate in one way as well as the other; and one is as legitimate an origin as the other, according to Hobbes. For what constitutes legitimacy, in his view? Whatever conduces to the highest good, that is the greatest happiness of each individual. Now, it has been proved that the state of nature, or of war, is the worst possible for the individual, and the state of society the best. Provided, then, that society exists, — no matter how it originated, — it is legitimate. Society, founded upon conquest, or the right of the strongest, is as legitimate and conformable to reason, as society based upon contract; for one attains, as well as the other, the end proposed for society; and it is the end, and the end alone, that determines its legitimacy.

What, now, is the best form of society, or, as it amounts to the same thing, the best among the various kinds of power by which society can be constituted? Hobbes does not hesitate to answer, the strongest. And which is the strongest? It is that in which power is concentrated in a single hand, or the monarchical form: the monarchical, therefore, is the most perfect form of government. But, of different modes of monarchy, which is the best? Again he answers, the strongest. And which is the strongest? Absolute monarchy. This, then, is the best of all forms for

society ; and this is a strict and necessary conclusion from the whole system.

Under whatever form, and upon whatever foundation government may rest, its rights and duties, or, in other words, the acts which it may, and which it may not, do to the members of society, remain always the same. As its mission is to overcome the resistance of individuals ; as it can maintain the state of peace only by subduing war ; and as war originates in the exercise of individual power, — it follows that the right and duty of every government is to repress and destroy the power of each individual, by all possible means. Consequently, government, whatever may have been its form and origin, has an unlimited right of action. Whatever it chooses to do is, for that very reason, right ; for its authority can be limited only by the increase of individual power ; that is to say, by introducing the state of war, thus sacrificing peace. Limitations to its authority are, therefore, contrary to the very end of its existence, and to the end of society ; and by permitting such limitations, it falls short of the ideal type, which every government should approach as nearly as is possible.

What, now, are the duties and rights of subjects in relation to a government, supposing this to be the true conception of government ? Rights they have none ; and their duties are all comprehended in the single one of obedience, under all circumstances, to whatever government may command ; for any disobedience to established power tends to reawaken the struggle for individual power ; and this is a return to that state of

war, which is the worst possible, and, consequently, the least legitimate of all states. Hence, as you may see, it follows necessarily, that it is the duty of the subject to obey, and that he has no right of resistance, whatever, against any thing that government ordains.

The only possible error, which government can commit, is the performance of acts tending to weaken or overthrow its power. But even when it does pursue false measures, subjects are still bound to respect it, and submit to it. For what makes any measure a false one? The fact that it tends to lessen the authority of the government. Disobedience would but increase the evil. The error of government can never justify, therefore, the disobedience of the subject. Subjects can in no case whatsoever, then, have rights against the government; for any right of resistance, even against injudicious measures, would be a return to that natural state of war, which is the worst state of all.

Such is the political system of Hobbes. It is, as you see, a necessary result of his ethical system, which is itself deduced, by strict reasoning, from his leading doctrine as to the end of man, and the single motive for all human action. With the exception of a few inconsistencies, to be noticed hereafter, the deduction is perfectly strict.

Thus briefly have I set before you the celebrated system of Hobbes; and the exposition has been, I trust, clear, exact, and complete. It now remains for us to see how far this doctrine is a true one, and,

if it errs, to determine the nature of the error on which it is based.

In the present lecture, I shall not communicate all the remarks which the system might suggest, but shall limit myself to an examination of the representation which it gives of the phenomenon of human volitions. And, in comparing this system with our own consciousness, I shall endeavor to show in what particulars it is inexact, incomplete, and, consequently, false. It is in its fundamental principle, then, that I shall examine the system of Hobbes; for, if this principle is true, we cannot refuse to admit all the consequences resulting from it.

By our analysis of the various modes of human volition, we have been led to the conclusion, that man is impelled to action in three different ways; that is to say, by three classes of motives. I have described these classes, and have shown you how each of these motives influences volition in a distinct and peculiar manner.

Of these three sources of volition, which observation has proved really to be active in the human soul, you see, at a glance, that Hobbes has overlooked or misunderstood two. This deficiency of exact analysis is important in itself, and yet more so in its consequences. As, instead of recognizing three distinct classes of motives, which determine human conduct, Hobbes admits only one, he inevitably arrives, by setting out from these false premises, at such consequences as contradict and overthrow all the ideas and beliefs which common experience has introduced into the minds of men.

And first, gentlemen, Hobbes has confounded the selfish motive, which he admits, with the motive of impulse and passion, which is always its predecessor, and perfectly distinct from it. In truth, the primitive tendencies of nature have not the same end with self-interest well understood, as conceived by reason. The peculiar and final end of each instinctive tendency is the particular object which it seeks. Thus, from the fact that I am an intelligent being, the desire of knowledge springs up within me; and this desire, in itself, impels me to learn, without the need of any calculation, by reason, of the consequences of this knowledge, or any foresight that its acquisition will give pleasure. This may be plainly seen among children, who have great curiosity, but certainly not from any calculation of its consequence; and mature men, although, in many instances, they do, undoubtedly, calculate, reason, and examine, before they act, yet far more frequently they follow the immediate impulse, and pursue the object exciting the desire, without a thought of the pleasure which its acquisition may bring. Do you think that he who loves and seeks the truth, does so on account of the pleasure which will follow the discovery of it, and because he has conceived beforehand and calculated that he shall, by this discovery, experience a certain amount of happiness? Nothing can be more unlike the actual fact, than such a supposition. In far the majority of cases, we seek the ends toward which the instincts of our nature impel us, for the ends themselves; in thought and purpose, the end itself is the only thing pursued or thought about,

and the pleasure is unforeseen and unanticipated. If this is true of mature men, it must be true of the child. The fact is, the child never calculates, never foresees the consequences of action. Children are incapable of forming such conceptions of the results of conduct as are absolutely requisite, before calculations of pleasure can be their final end, and their determining motive. Yet more may it be said, that, if we never obeyed the tendencies of our nature, except from considerations of the pleasure that will accompany their gratification, then would it be impossible that we should ever act at all. For, plainly, we never should know that the gratification of desires would procure us pleasure, except by having once experienced this pleasure. Therefore, it follows that, if it is true that the condition of our obeying impulse, is the conception of the pleasure attendant on its gratification, we never should have yielded, for the first time, to any instinctive tendency, and, consequently, should never have acted at all.

And, finally, the pleasure which is the end sought by self-love, implies the activity of those very impulses, whose end is different from this pleasure. For what causes the pleasure? The gratification of natural impulse. The impulse must exist, therefore, antecedently, or no pleasure would be possible. We never should experience the pleasure of quenching thirst, for example, unless we had this thirst; and thirst is a craving for a particular object — water. Self-love is the love of all those various pleasures which accompany the gratification of our different passions; it is entirely distinct from these, for it necessarily pre-

supposes the existence of passions having for their end, in action, objects quite different from this pleasure.

It is contradicting the actual fact, then, to maintain, that, whenever we obey an impulse, it is in view of the pleasure consequent on its gratification. But is this saying, on the other hand, that we never act and never pursue an object for the sake of pleasure? Far from it. For there can be no doubt that our choice is often thus determined. But, because we are thus sometimes governed in our actions, it nowise follows that we always are, or that we can be governed by no other motive. Among these modes, by which the human will is determined, is one entirely distinct from this of self-love, the characteristic of which is, that the motive originates directly from the instinctive impulses of our nature, and has for its final end the particular object which the passion craves.

Evidently, then, there is, in the idea of Hobbes, a fundamental error; and it consists in confounding two quite distinct modes of human volition; the instinctive mode, which is the only one seen in children at all, and which is seen, more or less, in mature men; and the mode of self-interest and calculation, which originates in a foresight of the pleasure that will follow the accomplishment of an act, and the possession of an object. It is plain, then, that even if the moral motive did not exist in us, it would still be false, wholly false, that the only end of all our actions is the pursuit of pleasure, and the avoiding of pain.



Great, however, as is the error of thus confounding impulse with self-love, the system of Hobbes is chargeable with one still greater, and quite as easily detected. It confounds the moral mode of volition with that of self-interest. For, as it is perfectly true and perfectly evident that, in a multitude of instances, we yield directly, and without calculation, to the primitive instincts of our nature, so it is equally true and yet more evident, that, in very many others, we yield to a motive which is neither a pure natural instinct, nor a calculation of pleasure, but a conception of duty.

This motive of duty, gentlemen, acts more or less upon all men : there is no one upon whom it does not act sometimes ; and the reason why we are so apt to suppose that it seldom influences human conduct, is, that it is, as I have been anxious to show you, so much in harmony, both with our natural instincts and our true self-interest, that we rarely find it acting by itself, and independently of these other motives. In most cases, the moral motive coöperates with impulse and self-love ; and in such cases, it is not duty, which is a pure conception of the reason, that is most apparent in the act of choice, but the instinct or the selfish calculation, which are far more easily recognized by consciousness. If, however, you will analyze your commonest purposes, you will find, that the idea of order, the consideration of what is good in itself, has an influence, which, though little noticed, is still really active. In the majority of cases, a man would be ashamed to act, except in a certain way ; he feels that it would be wrong to act in any other ; and this

consideration has great weight in affecting his decision. True, before yielding to the influence of such considerations, we are accustomed to conjecture the consequences; but, as the honorable path is usually the safe one, it happens most frequently among men of good sense, that such foresight of consequences strengthens, rather than impairs, the power of the sense of duty; and, in opposite cases, the sentiment of honor still weighs against that of interest, and not seldom counterbalances it. Do I, by such statements, make man appear better than he is, and attribute an exaggerated moral purity to his common modes of volition? In most cases, there is undoubtedly a mixture of other motives with that of duty; but then, on the other hand, we must not deny the fact, that the instinctive and selfish motives do not exercise exclusive control over us, but that the moral does modify their influence. The simple truth is, that, in a multitude of cases, the moral motive coöperates in the determinations of our will, while, in many others, it is the sole spring of conduct. A philosopher, then, who, first suppressing and denying the influence of the instinctive and impassioned mode of choice, goes on to deny also the moral mode, is doubly false to human nature. Thus mutilating our nature, and setting out from such false premises, how can he but arrive at conclusions, which will give him a wholly incomplete and erroneous principle of ethics. Apply to such a principle Hobbes's vigorous logic, and the necessary result must be deductions which will utterly overturn the common convictions of mankind.

But the psychological errors of Hobbes do not stop here. Admit his hypothesis, and grant that the selfish motive is the sole spring of all our conduct, still I maintain that, even within this limit, Hobbes is incomplete and faulty; I maintain that he has disfigured and mutilated even this part of our nature; or, in other words, I say that self-love, such as Hobbes has described it, is not the true self-love which exists in the nature given us by God.

Let me recall to your minds an observation, made while I was exhibiting to you an analysis of the moral facts of human nature; which is, that into the idea of self-interest well understood there enter two elements; first, a view of our own personal good, and, secondly, a view of the pleasure accompanying the attainment of this good. These two elements, distinct as they are, and as I have shown them to be, do still both enter into the idea which we form of our highest interests.

Hobbes, however, recognizes but one of these elements, and entirely neglects the other; so that, after having elevated self-love into being the only motive of volition, he actually proceeds to divide this motive, and then, casting aside the larger and better, preserves only the least part, which is but a consequence, result, and accompaniment of the other. When reason, awakening after long years of infancy, begins to ask what constitutes our highest good, and what ought to be the end of our conduct, the first thing it remarks is, that our nature instinctively pursues certain ends, which it cannot attain without pleasure, or fail of without pain. Naturally enough,

then, reason stops first at this idea, that the final end of our instincts is the happiness which their satisfaction gives.

But reason, gentlemen, cannot long rest here. Each instant, it meets with a crowd of facts, which prove the incompleteness of this idea. When a young and beautiful woman, passionately fond of the world and of display, devotes herself at once and entirely to the care of her child, and, renouncing pleasures lately sought, giving up her favorite pursuits, sacrificing her tastes and desires, forgets all that once occupied her, in the delight experienced while she sits night and day by the cradle of that young being, who is wholly incapable of repaying her affection,—who could see, in this sublime transformation, merely a selfish calculation of pleasure? Every one must see the presence of another motive, which at once, and independently of all reflection and calculation, impels the mother to love her child as a final end; I mean the powerful and wonderful instinct of sympathy. When the student, enamored of science, sacrifices health, repose, all pleasures which tempt mankind, to the enjoyment of hunting up from musty volumes select passages, comparing them together, and, after long and laborious investigation, drawing from them some inference as to a trifling event that occurred thousands of years ago,—who can fail to be struck with the evident and undeniable fact, that the cause of this devoted toil is simply the ardent curiosity for knowledge, which is one of the instincts of all intelligent beings? A love for truth in itself, and a longing to discover and know it, is his final

end, and he has never thought for a moment of the pleasure that will attend its discovery. Do we seek truth, then, from having calculated what sensations its acquisition will bring, or to obtain public applause, or for the gratification of vanity which this applause will give? Seeking truth from such motives, we should never find it; for then only do we gain it, when we pursue it for itself. Reason is struck at once with these and similar facts, forever presented in the world; it sees, then, that its first idea of our nature was incomplete, and recognizes the fact that there are things, which are good in themselves, quite independently of the pleasure which they occasion; and that they would continue to be good, even if the pleasure did not attend them. When reason takes this step, it rises to an idea of our true good wholly different from the first it had conceived; good now becomes to its view that which nature impels us to seek, and which is agreeable and in harmony with our nature; in other words, the second element of self-love appears.

This is not, indeed, the moral motive, but it approaches it nearly. This step being taken, a second at once succeeds. Reason demands why it is that certain things are in harmony with our nature, while others are not so;—why it is that we are attracted to certain objects, and repelled from others. The idea that our nature has been made for these very ends, takes the place of our former one, that these ends are agreeable to our nature; and, from this new idea, which, though still within the sphere of selfishness, approaches nearly the limits of morality,

we rise to a yet higher one, that all natures have their peculiar ends, — that there is one ultimate and absolute end, of which particular ends are but component parts, — that this absolute end is universal order, — and that this universal order is the will of God. Thus, at last, we are lifted above motives of a personal and selfish nature, and rise to one which is wholly impersonal and moral. These various transitions are necessary to conduct reason upward from the view of pleasure, as the only end of action, to that of absolute good — of good, properly so called. Self-love, then, is far more complex than Hobbes has considered it. It includes other elements besides the single one of pleasure — other ideas than that of happiness; and thus you see how, even in regard to self-love, Hobbes has given a mutilated and imperfect picture of human nature. He has given a false view of our nature in one other way also; and I shall close my lecture with its description.

We have seen that Hobbes has discovered, in self-love, only the one element of pleasure; whereas it appears there are several elements. But I confine myself now to a consideration of this single element; and I maintain that, even here, Hobbes has no more given a correct and complete view of pleasure, than he has of self-love. Of the three modes by which the human will is determined, he suppresses two, and admits only that of self-love; the selfish motive is complex, but he suppresses one of its elements, and preserves only that of pleasure. And now, does he do full justice to this? No: pleasure is also complex, but he mutilates it. For, among the pleas-

ures which man is capable of enjoying, a very large number are associated with the happiness of others; and these are our very highest pleasures. Who does not know that the contemplation of the happiness of others, as increased by our actions, or of assistance rendered by us for their support and relief, — who does not know that a consciousness of the sympathy that they feel for us, and a sentiment of the kindness that we experience towards them, — who does not know that these form the largest and the finest part of our happiness? In forming calculations as to the attainment of the highest amount of pleasure possible, a wise man would be careful, then, not to omit that class of pleasures which originate in sympathy, and which, more than all others, contribute to the happiness that, according to Hobbes, is the sole end to be pursued in life. Now, suppose that a man should not overlook, but recognize, this abundant source of agreeable sensations, — suppose that he should take them into his calculations, — could he ever arrive at the conclusion that the state of war is the state of nature? Never, gentlemen: he would come necessarily to the exactly opposite conclusion, that the social state is the truly natural state. For, if the sight of the happiness of others constitutes the largest and best portion of our own, the calculation of his individual happiness would lead a man of sense to occupy himself in securing the well-being of his brethren — to desire it, and labor for it: all men, therefore, merely for the sake of their own happiness, would desire the happiness of their fellow-men; all would seek to enjoy the delightful sentiments of

kindness towards, and sympathy from, their kind ; all would pursue the pleasures which friendship, love, family ties, national interests, and charity, alone can give. Yet more ; there is a powerful instinct in our nature,—an instinct which, ungratified, produces suffering, and, gratified, brings joy,—the social instinct ; and this impels us to seek society, and makes intercourse with fellow-men an absolute necessity. The satisfaction of this instinct, also, must be taken into our calculations and plans for happiness. I ask, now, how, in what marvellous and incomprehensible way, could the state of war gratify such wants as grow out of these natural dispositions ? Granting, then, that pleasure is the end of all our actions, and the sole motive of all volitions, yet still, when we regard this capacity for pleasure in its full extent, not only are we not led to the conclusion of Hobbes, that the state of nature is a state of war, but we arrive at a result diametrically opposite. Hobbes, then, reducing all motives to this single one of the pursuit of pleasure, has not comprehended the nature of pleasure even ; he has recognized only its grosser elements, which are the smallest in number, and least important ; and, even within the narrow limits to which he has confined himself, has disfigured, so far as an observer possibly could do, the true image of human nature.

What now, gentlemen, shall we say of a system built upon such a foundation of error ? Is it not already condemned ? Is it worth our while to examine and refute it ? It is not, scientifically speaking. But it does demand our further consideration, when we call



to mind the influence which it has exerted, and when we reflect that it owes this influence to the very fact of its mutilating, as it does, the moral element, while admitting only the grossest and most tangible elements of human volitions. It is this which gives it that appearance of simplicity, and that plausibility, which deceive the crowd ; and it is this which has made it seem valuable in the judgment of one of the most distinguished jurists of our age, — I mean Bentham, — who, in our day, has revived this system under a new form, hereafter to be described. We must go on, then, and finish the work we have begun ; we must examine and discuss the consequences and details of the system, whose fundamental principle we have now overthrown. To this duty my next lecture will be devoted.

## LECTURE XII.

## THE SELFISH SYSTEM. — HOBBS.

GENTLEMEN,

IN my last lecture I confined myself to the consideration of two points. First, I exhibited the system of Hobbes in its principles and consequences; and secondly, I compared these principles with the facts of human nature, of which they pretend to be a representation, and showed that a more deformed and mutilated image of the original could not possibly be formed.

Let me remind you, in brief, that Hobbes's system takes it for granted, that the universal motive of action is the desire of well-being; that is to say, the pursuit of agreeable sensations. To determine whether this system rests on a firm foundation, we must inquire, then, whether it is true, that human actions have no other origin than this desire of pleasure and abhorrence of pain. This is a simple question of fact: to decide it, we have merely to ask ourselves how our volitions are determined, and then compare with our consciousness this pretended picture of ourselves, which Hobbes sets before us. This we have done, and the result of

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our discussion was all but a complete demonstration of the utter falsity of the whole system.

I showed, in the first place, you will recollect, that of the three different modes of human volition, Hobbes has entirely overlooked two,—the impulsive and the moral,—and has admitted only one,—the selfish,—which he has consequently set up as the sole and universal motive of all choice and action. In the second place, I showed that the idea which Hobbes conceived of even this motive of self-love, was incomplete; inasmuch as in this selfish mode of volition, there is another element beside the desire of pleasure. Action is in harmony with our nature, quite independently of the pleasure that may result from it. So that, after having entirely set aside two of the modes of human volition, Hobbes mutilates the only one which he preserves, in suppressing by far the most important of the two elements of which it is made up, and admitting only its least important element of pleasure.

In the third place, I showed that Hobbes has mutilated even this element of pleasure, as he before had the principle of self-love, and the whole phenomenon of volition; for his system does not take into account, in its estimate, the largest and most numerous sources of happiness—the pleasures of sympathy; so that even pleasure itself, the only element of self-love recognized by Hobbes, is falsely represented; for he has, if I may say so, cut it in two, and thrown away its better portion; and thus finally has settled the whole matter, by considering this fragment of the element of pleasure as the universal and only motive of all choice and conduct.

I repeat it ; never has unfaithfulness to psychological truth been pushed so far ; never was there a system so completely and strangely disfiguring the true image of human nature. It is nowise extraordinary, therefore, that it leads to consequences so wholly untenable, monstrous, and contradictory to the universal faith and common sense of men. The consequences to which this system leads, are as absurd as its principles are false ; and common sense as instantly repels the one as observation does the other.

This might be called a direct refutation of the system of Hobbes. But, as you well know, there are two modes of refuting an opinion ; the first is to confront it with the truth, and compare them together ; the second is to consider it by itself, and see whether it is throughout consistent. Now, I should fail of exhibiting the utter weakness of Hobbes's system, if I omitted to apply to it this second mode of refutation ; for, although his mind was logical, he could not avoid falling into many contradictions, when his fundamental principle was so false. The present lecture will be occupied with an exhibition of the most glaring of these contradictions.

You will remember, doubtless, that Hobbes has demonstrated, as he thinks, that a state of war is the only natural state among individuals brought in contact with each other. You will remember also, that, appreciating the inconveniences of this state of things, he has declared this state of war to be the worst that can possibly exist, and hence has been led to the assertion, that it is for each man's highest interest to accept of the state of peace, at whatever cost, or upon whatever

conditions, it may be obtained, and thus has explained the creation of that social state, of which peace is at once the end and characteristic.

Now, this very mode of explaining the foundation of society necessarily implies a contradiction; and this is the first that I shall exhibit to you. If calculations of self-interest could lead men thus to substitute a state of peace for a state of war, a state of society for a state of nature, the very same calculations would have prevented and rendered impossible that natural state of war. For how can it be true, that man's natural state is a state of war, if it is in his nature to see and feel that this is the worst possible state for his own interests? If the principle of self-love leads to the apprehension of this truth, then it is difficult to see how it can produce the state of war which contradicts this truth, and not the state of peace which is in harmony with it. Admitting, then, that man is constituted as Hobbes asserts, his state of nature, as he calls it, is impossible. The same reasons assigned by him, as sufficient to bring it to an end, are strong enough to have prevented its ever originating: this is the first contradiction to which I would call your attention.

A second contradiction Hobbes is guilty of, when he asserts that in the state of nature there are natural rights, which give way, after the formation of a society, to positive rights. Hobbes says, that in the state of nature each man has a right to all things, and that this right is a natural right. Now, I confess, I am astonished, and cannot but find fault with Hobbes, that he should have introduced this word *right* into a system which utterly abolishes and excludes every such

idea as men have usually attached to that word. To satisfy yourselves of this, gentlemen, you have but to consider how different this pretended right is from the actual right, which the universal sense of mankind recognizes.

What are the characteristics of this right possessed by every one over all things — this natural and primitive right, according to Hobbes ?

In the first place, it is a right imposing no corresponding duty. If I have a right to the possession of all things, and my neighbor has equally this right, it follows that my right imposes no restraint upon him, neither does his right upon me ; my right destroys his, and his destroys mine ; there are no reciprocal duties. The first characteristic, then, of these rights, so called by Hobbes, is, that they have no corresponding duties.

But further ; so far from imposing any obligation upon others, this right of mine is one that every body has a perfect right to violate. So far as I have any right, just so far have others ; they have a right, then, to disregard my right. This natural right, therefore, not only does not impose duties upon any body, but, on the contrary, every body has a right to violate it. Of all rights, surely such a one is the strangest that can be conceived.

Once more ; this right is one which, though possessed by all, is recognized by none. For, since my right extends to every thing, and my neighbor's does the same, I cannot but recognize this right of his ; consequently, I cannot feel that I have the right myself. What is true of one is true of all ; and hence it seems

that no one can recognize that he himself has this right, which, nevertheless, each and all possess.

Thus it appears, then, that the three characteristics of this natural right, admitted by Hobbes, are, 1. that it imposes no corresponding duties; 2. that it is of such a nature that every body has a *right* to violate it; and, 3. that no one can recognize it as belonging to himself. What a prodigious difference is there between any such meaning of the word *right*, and its meaning in common acceptance! The word *right*, as used and understood by the best writers, and by the common sense of all men, from the shepherd, who guards his flock, to the legislator, who enacts laws, implies something which all must recognize as sacred, and which demands from all respect. If I possess a right, I perfectly comprehend — I and the whole world with me — that you, and every body else, are bound to respect it; that, by disregarding this right, you are false to a duty, and violate a consecrated thing. My right, then, imposes a duty upon all others; no other being has a right to violate it; and thus all recognize that it belongs peculiarly to me, and not to others; so that right, according to the universal understanding of mankind, has characteristics precisely opposite to those which mark the pretended right of Hobbes. Be not astonished, then, at meeting with the word *right* in a system which makes all right impossible. We may reconcile it with all systems, and interweave it with them, if we will but alter and destroy the very idea that the name of right expresses.

What I have now said of rights, as the word is defined

and employed by Hobbes, might be said with equal truth of duties. What, according to him, are duties? He recognizes but one class of these — the duties of the subject to the government; there are no duties for government; duties are confined to subjects. And now, I ask, what is the nature of these duties? And, supposing myself in the position of the subject, I find that, in my relation to government, two kinds of cases may arise; — first, those in which it appears to be for my interest to obey; and, second, those where obedience seems to be against my interest. Now, in the former case, to what motive does a man yield, when he obeys and respects state authority? Evidently to the single motive admitted by Hobbes, that is, *self-interest well understood*. But what, then, shall the subject do in the second case, where he finds obedience prejudicial to his interests? Has not Hobbes declared, that interest is the only possible motive of volition; and yet more, that each is sole and sovereign judge of his own interest, and that he may not be condemned for his judgment? What becomes, then, of the duty? By what motive shall the subject still be led to obey and respect government? There is no such motive, if man is constituted as Hobbes supposes. If, then, he pretends that, in such cases, the subject must obey, Hobbes falls into a manifest contradiction of his own system; for, if a man can feel that to be a duty which is not for his interest, then must there be some other motive beside self-interest, and Hobbes's system is false. But Hobbes will say, it is always for our interest to obey government, because the state of war is the worst of all states. To this I reply, that if I see this to be for my interest,



then it is to the motive of interest I yield; and duty means, therefore, only interest well understood; but if I do not see it to be for my interest, how shall I be influenced by interest well understood, when I do not understand my interest? And if I do not understand it, what motive to obedience remains? What becomes of Hobbes's duty? What signification has the word? Is it not plain that Hobbes must either give up the word, as an unmeaning one, or contradict his system by assigning it a meaning?

So far, gentlemen, from there being any ground upon which, according to Hobbes, an individual may be constrained to do what is for his interest, when he does not comprehend that it is so, the consequence from his principle would lead to the exactly opposite result—that the individual has a right to violate such duties, as it is pretended interest imposes, when he does not see that they would advance his interest. What is *natural right*, according to Hobbes? It is precisely the right, possessed by each individual, of seeking what he conceives to be his highest good, in just the manner which he thinks best. Such is natural right, in Hobbes's system. If he pretends, then, to impose upon the subject the duty of obeying government, when he sees it to be for his interest not to obey it, he is imposing a duty which the subject has, according to his own doctrine, a perfect right to neglect and violate.

Now, what is *duty*, according to the common understanding of mankind, as manifested in every language? It is something sacred in itself, something which we are obliged to perform, and which is acknowledged and

recognized as sacred, not only by the person bound to observe it, but by all others, who, recognizing it as sacred, have, for that reason, a perfect right to demand that it shall be respected.

Thus, when I see that I have a duty, I feel compelled to discharge it; and others feel, although my performance of the act may not affect them, yet because they comprehend the obligations resting on a man in the different situations of life, that it is my duty, and that they have a right to say, "Do this, or be judged unworthy." Between this idea of duty, as it exists in universal human consciousness, and the idea of interest well understood, which Hobbes is obliged to substitute for the true meaning of the word, there is a distinction too wide to be overlooked — a distinction quite as important, as that which separates the signification of *right* in his system from its common signification among mankind.

Hobbes may use the words *right* and *duty*, therefore; but if he employs them in their general acceptation, he falls into a monstrous and glaring contradiction. If, on the other hand, and as apparently is the case, he attaches to them a new and unwonted sense, we may well inquire by what title and authority does he alter thus the common meaning of words, and so deceive his reader into the idea that rights and duties are, or can be, recognized in such a system as his? For one or the other of these abuses of language, Hobbes must seem liable to condemnation, in the judgment of every reasonable man.

It is in vain, in a system which does not admit, among the possible motives of human volition, the

rational motive, to pretend to discover any thing even remotely resembling a right or a duty. The attempt must always utterly fail.

When I yield to the impulse of passion, my act has no moral character whatever, and I feel no right to demand that others should regard me with respect; for I am not seeking to accomplish absolute good, but merely to gratify my desire. Again, when I follow interest well understood, my motive is still personal; it is not for absolute good, but for private good, that I act, and I feel that there is nothing which gives my conduct a claim to respect in my own or others' eyes; my happiness is agreeable and pleasing in prospect, but I am aware that it imposes no duties, and secures me no rights. If men recognized no other motives than these two of impulse and interest, then the ideas of rights and duties would not exist. Whence come these ideas? On what condition can they originate? On one condition only, and that is, that there is such a thing as absolute good — something good, not from the benefit it brings to one or to every individual of our race, but from the eternal nature of things. On this condition, rights and duties become possible; because, whenever an act to be performed appears to have this character of absolute good, at once I feel myself obliged to do it; and, feeling this obligation, I am conscious of my right to act without hinderance; because, since every other person may see, as I do, that it is absolutely good, and feel, as I do, that I am bound to perform it, he must be conscious of an obligation on his part not to prevent me in its execution, but to remind me of my responsibility, and even to demand that I should discharge my

duty, if he suffers from my neglect. Thus all rights and duties are naturally derived from the rational motive. Suppress this motive, and duties and rights become impossible; the words themselves have no meaning, and are of no further use in human speech. Under whatever disguise or mask, then, the selfish or the impulsive systems may present themselves, they can never properly introduce the true ideas of duty or of right.

We may well suppose that Hobbes was sensible of the unfitness of his system, as a foundation for social rights and duties, and that his wish to supply this deficiency led to his hypothesis of a contract upon which society is based. If this was his idea, he was guilty of a great error; for a contract presupposes the moral motive, and in his system is just as impossible as rights and duties.

Men, says Hobbes, feeling war to be the worst possible state of existence, united together; and, desiring at any cost to substitute peace, they agreed to establish a power sufficiently strong to subdue individuals, with the especial object of restraining them, and compelling them to live in harmony. Such, according to Hobbes, was the origin of many communities, and such the foundation of the laws by which they are governed.

Let us adopt the hypothesis, gentlemen, and then ask what is the meaning of such a contract, and what is its authority over the individuals who enter into it.

Let us take, then, two men, constituted as Hobbes supposes all men to be; and now what will be a contract to them, and how far will they feel themselves bound by it? They have entered into certain engage-

ments, for the purpose of securing their highest interests; how far, now, may they depend upon each other's respect for these engagements? If each supposes that the other will be governed by the agreement, only in so far as he sees his own interests are promoted by it, then, I say, the contract is useless; for, before it was formed, each might have expected from the other quite as much. If, on the contrary, either anticipated that the person with whom he enters into the contract will observe its provisions, even where interest impels him to disregard them, then, I ask, on what ground does he rest such a hope? By what reasoning can a man, constituted as Hobbes asserts that we all are, feel himself bound to respect an engagement which is inferior to his interests? On the contrary, would he not, in such a case, have a most manifest and undeniable right to violate it? His promise restrains him, says Hobbes. Ay! it would restrain men made as we are, but not such as Hobbes describes. For why is a promise binding? Because, and only because, reason declares it to be so, and tells us plainly that it cannot be broken without falsehood and infamy. Once admit that there is no good which is absolute, and independent of personal interest, and a promise is an empty word. Now, a promise is the very foundation of a contract, and constitutes its strength. A contract, then, between two such beings as Hobbes supposes men to be, would be unmeaning; for to agree to do a thing, with the reservation that we need not do it, if we think best, is not to make a contract, but a mere mockery; and if this were the only kind of engagement possible among men, the word *contract* would not be found in any language. If

Hobbes pretends, then, to establish social rights and duties upon a primitive contract, in which society originates, he has deceived himself; for contracts presuppose duties, and a system excluding duties, *a fortiori*, excludes contracts. But it is much to be doubted whether Hobbes had any such intention, as we have here supposed. His whole system proves how little confidence he felt in the obligation of any contracts, and how low he estimated them. He admitted two possible modes in which society might originate; — first, the consent of the individuals combining to establish it, or, in other words, a contract; and, secondly, the violent enslavement of individuals by one or many, that is to say, the right of the strongest. And he goes further; he considers one form of society as legitimate as the other, and asserts that one imposes equal duties upon the subject with the other. He had so little faith in the obligation of a contract that he trusted wholly in force to maintain it. And finally, according to Hobbes, government has a perfect right to disregard the contract in which it originated; it is equally guiltless, whether it observes or violates it. Whether it is founded upon contract or force, whether it benefits or injures its subjects, their duty remains still the same. Government may do wrong in the sight of Heaven, and may act in opposition to its own true good, but it still deserves the respect and the obedience of the subject. If Hobbes seriously intended, then, to establish social duties upon contract, he did all in his power to make his readers disbelieve him.

Thus you see, gentlemen, that the word *contract*, in the system of this philosopher, is as unmeaning as the

words *duties* and *rights*. And we might say the same of the word *society* ; for what is society but a visionary and impracticable thing, if men are really such beings as Hobbes pretends ? Society, as Hobbes describes it, is not a society, but a mere constrained juxtaposition of individuals ; its members do not obey ; they yield ; they are not governed by authority, but by force ; the laws which restrain them are chains ; and, in a word, all expressions descriptive of the grand relations originating in the social state, lose their proper meaning, and assume a false one, when applied to such communities as Hobbes, in conformity with his system, imagines to exist. And the reason for this is plain ; a true society necessarily implies true rights and duties, true contracts and promises, a true obedience and authority, true laws, — each and all of which are impossible, if there is no such thing as absolute good. Every system which suppresses and denies the moral motive, is forced, then, to mutilate at once the complex idea of society, and every elementary idea which this presupposes and includes.

Is this saying that individual interest has nothing to do with the formation of society ? By no means. If a philosopher should profess such an opinion, he would be obliged to maintain, first, that the moral motive is the only motive of human volitions, and that the selfish motive neither exists nor exercises any control over our actions ; he would be obliged, in other words, in adopting such an idea of society and its constituent laws, to form as false, though an entirely opposite conception of a human being as Hobbes has done. The image of man must resemble the reality in the principles of a system, if

we would have its practical results correspond to what we actually see in human society. When we recognize and admit all the elements of man's nature, his conduct and experience are easily explained, and especially that wonderful phenomenon which we call *society*. The communities of beavers are explicable by the nature of beavers, and human communities are to be accounted for by the principles of human nature. To form an accurate idea, therefore, of the origin and formation of human society, we must set out from a correct idea of human nature; here only can we find true light to guide us — all else is hypothesis and contradiction.

I acknowledge at once that interest has much to do with the first formation of society, and with the whole of legislation; and it would be very absurd to deny it. But to pretend, on the other hand, with Hobbes and Bentham, that interest, and interest alone, is the cause of the foundation, organization, and maintenance of society, — to assert that this principle of our nature is the sole end of all law and right, — is openly to contradict real facts and universal common sense. When we come to the discussion of the science of jurisprudence, I will point out to you the respective influence of the principle of utility, and of the moral principle, in the work of legislation, and will enable you distinctly to apprehend the peculiar function of each. I limit myself, now, to the simple statement of the fact that both of these principles concur in the production of all systems of legislation, and that he, therefore, who attempts to explain the existence of society by the operation



of one of these principles only, must necessarily find much that he cannot explain, and much that he will mutilate and deform.

It will not be unprofitable for us to reflect, in conclusion, upon the circumstances which led Hobbes to this system which he so boldly maintained, which Bentham, in our time, has reproduced, and which will reappear, again and again, in every important era of the history of philosophy, because fully expressing one of the solutions — although a partial and narrow one — of the grand moral problem.

Hobbes lived at the time of the English revolution. Chance, and perhaps also the bias of his character, threw him into connection with the party in favor of absolute power; that is to say, the party of the Stuarts. The sight of the revolution and of its excesses could not but have the effect of confirming him in his principles and his attachments. It seemed to him that society was dissolved, because it was in a state of revolution; and he thought he saw the true cause of its ruin in the overturn of established authority. He was led, therefore, to the conclusion, that societies can exist, and men live in peace, only where power is extremely strong, or, in other words, absolute; and he could not conceive that order was possible upon any other condition. This idea was, without doubt, the moving spring of Hobbes's philosophy; and it was under its influence that he examined the laws of human nature, and of the origin of societies. Hobbes was not a remarkable psychologist; he was a logician; and nothing are more opposed to each other than logic and observation. In his day, psy-

chology was in its cradle; philosophers scarcely regarded it at all; and yet it is impossible to answer questions relative to human nature, if we are ignorant of the laws of that nature.

Hobbes, preoccupied as his mind was with favorite ideas, and passions, and interests, found in man just what he desired to find, and wholly overlooked whatever contradicted his conclusions. I do not condemn him on this account. It was a most natural thing for him to do. But thus it was, that he was led to the adoption of the strange system which I have described, repugnant as it is to all the facts of our nature, and to all the notions of common sense. Others professed similar ideas at the same time; but no one manifested, in the expression of them, equal vigor and intellectual superiority. Among such writers were two of eminence, both natives of France. The first was Laroche foucauld, the author of the *Maximes*. It would be unjust, I think, to consider the author of the *Maximes* chargeable with all the extravagances of Hobbes. The only object of this intelligent man and admirable writer was to show, that there are but few actions—even among those apparently the most disinterested and virtuous—which might not be dictated by a selfish motive. Between such a view as this, and the view that every human action is absolutely inspired by selfishness, there is a very wide distinction. It was the aim of Laroche foucauld to unmask, in every possible way, hypocrisy of conduct, and to examine strictly the motives in which acts originated, before pronouncing them virtuous: he made war upon appearances, and was inclined, per-

haps, to attribute too much influence to selfishness in the determinations of human choice. Thus far Larochevoucauld did undoubtedly go; but this is all that is taught or necessarily implied in his *Maximes*, and I do not think we can justly attribute to him a deeper meaning.

The second philosopher referred to, of whom it is unnecessary to say much, was Helvetius; in whose book, entitled *De L'Esprit*, we find all the ethical maxims of Hobbes clearly and positively announced. Helvetius did not hesitate at all to declare, that man's only motive for choice is the pursuit of pleasure and the dread of pain; and he boldly deduced the consequences of his principle. Helvetius was the child of Condillac; the morality of the former sprung from the metaphysics of the latter. And, indeed, if we once admit that sensation is the germ of all knowledge, we can scarcely avoid the conclusion that agreeable sensations are the germ of all good. The doctrine is in both cases precisely the same; it is only transferred from the intellect to the will.

Like many other authors of bad systems, Helvetius was one of the best men in the world; and his object in writing his book was much more to exhibit talent than to establish truth; and in this he certainly succeeded. No doctrine could offer a better opportunity for that skilful introduction of brilliant expression and piquant anecdote, which renders the book *De L'Esprit* at once so entertaining, yet so full of melancholy suggestions.

Few philosophers have been of greater service than Hobbes. Many writers, who have given a mutilated

and imperfect representation of human nature, have so wrapped it up and veiled it by want of precision of thought and expression, that it is difficult to discover what errors they have made; and, as to the consequences of their principles, sometimes they do not perceive them themselves, or, if perceiving them, they do not dare to push them to extreme results. Not so with Hobbes. He folds his system in no ornamental drapery; his style is perfectly simple, clear, and dry; he never employs an unnecessary word in expressing his thought; and there is no possibility of misunderstanding either the meaning of his language or the scope of his arguments. But this is not his only merit. After distinctly exhibiting his principle, he unhesitatingly deduces from it all its consequences; he fears not to admit and to maintain all that necessarily results from it, destructive though it may seem to morality, freedom, and society. In reading Hobbes, we are compelled to acknowledge the justice of his conclusions, and to grant that we must either adopt them or reject his principle altogether. Now, this, gentlemen, is rendering a great service to the cause of science. It is only when a partial and imperfect system is exhibited with clearness and boldness, that we can hope to expose and refute it. So long as a system is enveloped in mystification, it may be tolerated, however detestable its character; but the instant when its revolting consequences are laid bare, we are constrained to inquire whether or not it is founded on truth. This is exactly what occurred with regard to the system of selfishness. Hobbes's exposition brought out so broadly all its

consequences, that the philosophers of his time were led to scrutinize severely his principle; and they were not long in discovering that he had been guilty of mutilating and deforming human nature; and hence arose that deep study of psychology which has, in our day, brought so clearly to view the true elements of our moral being. And thus to Hobbes's exertions we are indebted for a distinctness and completeness in the sciences of politics, ethics, and psychology, which, but for his writings, we might long have wanted.

END OF VOL. I.













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